THE COURT OF CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN AND THE LATER ADVENTURES OF THE QUEEN IN EXILE

FRANCIS HENRY GRIBBLE

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THE COURT OF CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS BY

FRANCIS GRIBBLE

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*GEORGE SAND AND HER LOVERS

ROUSSEAU AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

CHATEAUBRIAND AND HIS COURT OF WOMEN

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THE COURT OF CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

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BY

FRANCIS GRIBBLE

AUTHOR OF "GEORGE SAND AND HER LOVERS" ETC.

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1913

PREFACE

THE personality and proceedings of Queen Christina of Sweden were the subject of passionate controversy during her life; and the echoes of the disputation have never quite died away. She has been praised as one who—her heart being touched by the divine grace—made a great sacrifice for conscience' sake. She has also been denounced as a monster of licence and cruelty: a woman, who, if she did not make a practice of murdering her lovers, at least caused one of them to be done to death in extraordinarily barbarous circumstances.

As a matter of fact, while, like other people, she deserves both praise and blame, she merits neither that particular blame nor that particular praise. On the one hand, she wore the cloak of religion, almost to the last, with far too jaunty an air to be mistaken for a saint. On the other hand, the doing to death of a member of her suite in the Fontainebleau Palace—whether one styles it murder or execution—was, at any rate, no *crime passionel*. Monaldeschi may or may not have been a traitor—may or may not have been a liar and a slanderer; but it is as certain as anything can be that he was not, and never had been, a lover.

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The question has been raised, indeed, whether Christina, who has been accused of having had so many lovers, ever really had any lover at all; the secrets of her alcove having been almost as well kept as the secret of the motive of her crime. She went, say her champions, no further than flirtation with her young favourites at Stockholm; no further than "Platonic" friendship with Cardinal Azzolino at Rome. She resembled, in short, according to that theory, the beautiful heroine in Mr. George Moore's *Celibates*, who delighted in dalliance, but was deterred by a modesty indistinguishable from terror from yielding to any man's passionate advances; and she kept lovers at a distance for the same reason for which she refused to marry.

That theory cannot be formally disproved; but it is hard to believe that those who prefer it, though they may have glanced over Christina's Aphorisms, have read them carefully and searched for clues. Many of them are, in all conscience, platitudinous enough,—mere commonplaces of worldly or religious wisdom; but there are hints dropped in them, whether purposely or inadvertently, which rank as revelations. They are the Aphorisms, not of an Old Maid, to whom Man is a strange and terrible being, but of a woman who has lived and loved,—quite enough, at all events, to know one side of the Rubicon from the other. And when we place those Aphorisms side by side with the Letters to Cardinal Azzolino, recently printed by Baron de Bildt, the particular

application of the general sentiments is clear. Christina was neither too religious nor too intellectual for a "grand passion." She loved the Cardinal; and she believed, whether rightly or wrongly, that her first love was her last, and that her last love was her first.

We need not discuss the ethics of a maiden lady's passion for a priest who was bound to celibacy. It is difficult to say whether such an affection should be judged by its affect upon character or by first principles; and the attempt to determine the vexed question would only leave the investigator stranded on the quicksands of perplexity. But the facts, which can, in a large measure, be determined, are important as well as interesting. They bring Christina into touch with that common humanity which she aspired to surpass by her talents and her nobility of soul. They enable her biographer to put the dots on the i's of Pope Innocent XI.'s appreciation: "*E donna*,—she is a woman and behaves as such."

The most valuable books about Christina are those which her countryman, Baron de Bildt, has written round her correspondence with Azzolino. Biographers like Woodhead and Bain, who wrote without access to the documents contained in those volumes, grappled with their subject under a heavy disadvantage. There was a great deal which it was impossible for them to understand,—a great deal at which it was only possible for them to guess. The present biographer is deeply indebted to Baron

de Bildt, and acknowledges his indebtedness with gratitude.

Practically all the rest of the available material has been brought together in the four ponderous tomes of Arckenholtz; but the work of Arckenholtz cannot justly be said to block the way to any other writer. It belongs to the great category of "books which are no books," presenting the characteristics of a work of reference rather than a narrative. It is imperative to consult it, but impossible to read it,—for reasons which will be recognised as valid by every one who has made the attempt.

FRANCIS GRIBBLE.

August 27, 1913.

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From a painting by SEBASTIEN BOURDON.

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THE COURT OF CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

CHAPTER I

The end of the Thirty Years War—Christina's desire for peace—Her passion for self-development and for living her own life in her own way—The neurosis of the North—An Ibsen heroine before the letter

THE Thirty Years War raged from 1618 till 1648. Christina of Sweden was born in the midst of it—in the midst, as it were, of the booming of guns and the rattling of sabres—in 1626, and grew up in a period of tumults, alarms, and triumphs. She was not insensible of the glory which the triumphs reflected on her reign; but womanhood nevertheless found her with a deep and ever-deepening desire for peace.

Her subjects saluted her, in the Coronation ceremony, not as the Queen, but as the King of Sweden; and she was distinguished by many masculine accomplishments and qualities. She learnt to swear as roundly as our armies are said to have sworn in Flanders; and she could not only ride, but also shoot. It was said that

she could hit a hare with deadly aim while riding at full gallop, though tears always came to her eyes when she realised that the poor little thing was dead. But war was not her sphere, and could not be; for she was brilliantly clever and alive to intellectual and civilised ambitions. Amid the clash of arms, she had acquired a taste, amounting almost to a passion, for the arts; her aspiration was to be the Queen, not of a rough camp, but of a refined and polished Court.

Neither swaggering soldiers nor long-headed politicians, that is to say, were Christina's ideal men. She had, indeed, a natural instinct for politics,—she came to be almost as capable as Louis XIV. of being her own Prime Minister; but her real interests were elsewhere. The society which she preferred was that of philosophers, —or, alternatively, that of fashionable young aristocrats of engaging manners. So she laboured, in the face of the opposition of the leading Swedish statesmen, for the conclusion of that Treaty of Westphalia which, in 1648, not only rearranged the map of Europe, but also gave her the opportunity—or, at least, the semblance of the opportunity—of living her own life in her own way in the company of her own friends.

It is as a Queen to whom the pride of her royal status was nothing if she might not live her own life in her own way that Christina challenges and holds attention as one of the

most interesting figures in history. She not only put an end to a war in order to achieve that purpose; she also abandoned her throne and changed her religion as steps towards its accomplishment. The story of her life is, consequently, before all things, the story of a great renunciation and a bold experiment: not the less interesting because the experiment, like most human experiments, failed to give full satisfaction, and the exalted hour of renunciation had its sequel in moments of repentance and regret. Christina, as we shall see, was not without her share of the inconsistency commonly attributed to her sex; but her magnificent gesture was, nevertheless, sincerely made. She was, at the moment when she made it, an artist in life intent upon self-expression, genuinely preferring self-development to pomp.

One admires her the more because self-development is difficult for kings and queens, unless they are content to develop on conventional lines and within close limitations. Kingship is a specialised mode of activity; a king is expected to be—and can hardly help being—the thing for which Alfred de Musset professed such abhorrence when his parents urged him to become a lawyer: "a particular kind of man." His pleasures, as well as his duties, are stereotyped. He is taught, from his childhood upwards, that he must work, and pray, and love, and divert himself in accordance with rigid rules and traditional expectations.

He must be, or pretend to be, a soldier, a churchgoer, and a sportsman, fond of fine clothes, crowded rooms, and ceremonious banquets. He may pass, indeed, from the society of a wife for whom he does not care to that of mistresses who do not care for him ; but the very grandeur of his position excludes him from sincere sentiment and reciprocated passion. He may be a Don Juan, but not a Galahad or a Pilgrim of Love ; and his first step towards originality in these or in other matters brings him up against barriers which he cannot overcome unless he pulls them down.

The majority of kings, it may be, do not find the restrictions very irksome ; for the majority of kings doubtless resemble the majority of their subjects in having vulgar ambitions and commonplace ideals. Even when such ideals and ambitions are not quite natural to them, early habit makes them second nature. They find it easy to dispense with the bracing exercise of unhandicapped competition with their equals. They find it more comfortable to assume than to prove their superiority to other men ; and it is not displeasing to them to adopt towards the experts in statesmanship and the arts, whose services are at their disposal, an attitude akin to that which the ordinary employer of labour takes towards the carpenter and the plumber.

Similarly, in the matter of their amusements, they adapt themselves, as a rule, readily enough to the supposed exigencies of their position.

Their governors have no difficulty in persuading them that to shoot at birds is the most rational of all kinds of human recreation, and that to look on while horses race, and stake money on the results of the races, is, in very truth, the sport of kings. They find a magic in the make-believe and a charm in the homage which is laid at their feet without discoverable reference to their merits. So they run in grooves for which they have been prepared, and which have been prepared for them,—grooves in which, if a king has the tastes commonly associated with members of the Bullingdon and subalterns in the Guards, everything which the heart can desire would seem to be provided for convenience and delight.

But one thing has not been provided : liberty to leave the groove, when they get tired of it, and be themselves and live their own lives in their own way.

That does not matter, of course, to the typical monarch who combines a magnificent manner with a sloppy mind and ambitions limited to martial and material things. Such a one asks nothing better than to be a soldier, a sportsman, a Don Juan, and the central figure of the pageants. Provided that his armies do not lose too many battles, he will live and die thanking the goodness and the grace that on his birth have smiled ; for the education of princes is chiefly directed to that end—to the comfort of the man who is, in the main, pretty

much like other men, and has the ordinary man's disposition to take things easily, and swagger, without undue emotional strain or intellectual exertion.

Yet the barriers are always there, however gorgeously they may be gilded; and now and again a prince or a princess has individuality enough to be painfully sensible of them, and to kick against the pricks, in the spirit of the poet revolting against the destiny which has made him, let us say, a dental surgeon or a bank clerk. In our own days the princes—and even the princesses—of the House of Habsburg are continually kicking against those gilded pricks and insisting upon a lion's share of the common lot: as did John Orth, for instance, and "Herr Wulfling," and Princess Louisa of Tuscany. In the past the most famous cases are those of Charles v., who descended from his throne in order to become a holy man, and Diocletian, who stripped himself of the purple for the sake of cultivating cabbages.

That is the category of monarchs to which Christina belonged. She, too, revolted against her exalted lot in order to pursue her somewhat different line of self-development, quitting the position of the Minerva of the North in order to become a wandering amateur of culture and the arts; and her renunciation made a far more enduring noise in the world than did her reign.

Both her motives and her proceedings have

been much and stormily discussed, — chiefly because, when she renounced her title to the Swedish throne, she also renounced the Lutheran religion and submitted herself, as did so many persons of culture at that period, to the authority of the Church of Rome. Hence the conflicting blasts blown upon the brazen trumpets of innumerable theologians. Protestants have written of Christina as, first, a traitor to the true faith, and then a perverted monster of iniquity. Catholics, on the other hand, have applauded her as a devoted daughter of the Church, who made a noble sacrifice for conscience' sake. Conceiving it to be their duty to exaggerate, they have thrown their whole souls into the task, with the result that to trust them is to be led astray.

Christina, as we shall see, was neither so admirable a woman as the Catholics nor so despicable a woman as the Protestants have represented. She was, at once, more unique and more human than the controversialists on either side allow. Above all, she was more feminine and, if the word may pass, more modern : a woman, in short, who would, in many ways, have found herself in touch with many of the modern women whom one meets in modern drawing-rooms.

Modernity, in fact, far more than even femininity, was the dominant note of her personality. "*E donna*—she is a woman and behaves as such," was the phrase in which

Pope Innocent XI. summed her up; but that judgment only contained a portion of the truth. Christina was also essentially a modern woman, — a woman whom we should still account modern nowadays, and for whose mental and modern characteristics there was, in her own seventeenth century, no known precedent. "Neurotic," "neuropathic," "neurasthenic"—those are the epithets with which her own countryman, Baron de Bildt, has, in recent years, assailed her; and if we accept the adjectives as terms, not of abuse, but of psychological definition, we may hope to find in them the clues to a good many of the mysteries.

It is, in short, as the first conspicuous case of the neurosis of the North—that mysterious malady with which Ibsen's dramas have familiarised the modern world—that Christina's career arrests and enchains our interest. The evidence which justifies the statement will present itself, piece by piece, as the story is unfolded; but, when it is given, it will be clear that, if we are to understand Christina, and to sympathise, and to make allowances where we cannot approve, we must think of her as an Ibsen heroine before the letter, placed in a station in which her least gesture was bound to be observed, and therefore astonishing a world which as yet knew nothing of Ibsen heroines,— their fixed ideas, their quick and wayward logic, their desperate impulses, and their famous cry

of bitter determination, so incomprehensible to the disciplined and orderly Latin intelligence—

Je veux vivre de ma vie.

With that prelude we may proceed to the telling of the story.

CHAPTER II

The Thirty Years War—Why Sweden joined in it—Position of Sweden in Europe during Christina's childhood

THOUGH the Thirty Years War, in a sense, blocks the way, no reader would thank the writer for digressing into a history of it. The Thirty Years War must, as far as possible, be taken for granted; though it will be better to interpose a word or two, indicating the European outlook and the position of Sweden among the Powers during Christina's early years.

The war, let us recall, then, was in its origin a German war and a religious war,—a war between Protestant and Catholic Germany; a struggle between the central authority of the Empire and the independent claims of the vassal princes. Almost every other country in Europe became, by degrees, entangled in the contest: some of them joining in it on religious grounds; others for fear of the fate which might befall them if they stood aloof; others again in the hope of snatching advantage out of the confusion. All the little wars of Europe became, in consequence, confounded in a single war of a terribly devastating character.

It was a war which made a clean sweep of the national institutions of Germany and, in many districts, practically wiped out the population; the non-combatants perishing in hardly less numbers than the fighting men. If it had lasted but a very little longer, it would have thrown Europe back into that state of barbarism in which the Roman legions found it in the first year of the Christian era. A few typical figures brought together by Professor Gardiner may be cited to show the immensity of the ruin wrought—

"The losses of the civil population" (Professor Gardiner writes) "are almost incredible. In a certain district of Thuringia, which was probably better off than the greater part of Germany, there were, before the war-cloud burst, 1717 houses standing in 19 villages. In 1649 only 627 houses were left. And even of the houses which remained many were untenanted. The 1717 houses had been inhabited by 1773 families. Only 316 families could be found to occupy the 627 houses. Property fared still worse. In the same district 244 oxen alone remained of 1402. Of 4616 sheep not one was left. Two centuries later the losses thus suffered were scarcely recovered."

Nor was that the worst. If one passes from statistics to anecdotes, one is plunged into a abysm of horrors. The soldiers tortured the

civilians in order to compel them to bring their hidden property to light. They burnt their houses and chased the fugitives like beasts of prey: those whom they caught they stuck up as targets to shoot at. One reads of starving dogs eating men, and of starving men eating dogs. One reads of corpses torn from their graves to be eaten; one reads even of cannibalism. In the forests of Franconia a regular band of man-hunters was established,—man-hunters who were ultimately caught *in flagranti delicto*, banqueting round a cauldron of boiling human flesh.

But enough of these horrors, picked at random from history appallingly rich in horrors. One cites them only to show what kind of a war it was that Christina worked to stop, without much help from her statesmen, and in defiance of the thunders of the clergy. For it is one of the ironies with which the history of religion abounds that, at a time when Europe was sick of its sufferings and bleeding well-nigh to death, that "voice of the churches" to which unthinking people in all ages look for guidance had no message except that the slaughter had better continue until all the heretics were slain. On the one hand, the Pope launched a Bull in favour of the prolongation of the atrocities, and on the other hand, the Lutheran pastors fulminated from their pulpits against the peace. *Arcades ambo*; and one cannot better introduce Christina, albeit one must anticipate to do so, than

by relating how she dealt with one of her own intolerant clergymen. The story is in the *Memoirs* of Chanut, the French Ambassador to Stockholm—

"The pastor of one of the Stockholm churches" (Chanut writes) "denounced the peace furiously from his pulpit, on the ground that it had not secured liberty for the Lutheran religion in the Emperor's hereditary domains, and thundered against all Catholics, warning his congregation not to trust them in spite of the Treaty, but, on the contrary, to cherish in their hearts an undying hatred against people who spoke of them as heretics.

"The Queen, hearing of this, sent for the pastor and admonished him so sternly that he looked embarrassed and bewildered, and denied having used the words which four thousand people had heard him speak."

That at the age of twenty-two. It was worth while to anticipate in order that our first view of Christina might be so characteristic; but we must go back from the peace to the war in order to see how and why Sweden came into it in the reign of Christina's father, the great Gustavus Adolphus.

His motives, no doubt, like most human motives, were mixed. He had travelled through Germany in disguise and remarked the luxuriant beauty of the valley of the Rhine,—so much

richer than the barren lands over which he ruled in the frozen North,—and the vision had tempted him. He had further remarked the wealth and arrogance of the Rhenish prelates, and that vision also had made its impression. "If these priests," he wrote (speaking in the assumed character of a Swedish nobleman), "were subject to the King, my master, he would long ago have taught them that modesty, humility, and obedience are the proper characteristics of their profession."

It was not too late, Gustavus Adolphus felt, to teach those prelates the lesson which they needed. Their pride, if left unchecked, might be a danger to him, for he held possessions on the Prussian side of the Baltic; the breaking of their pride might enable him to extend those possessions. Moreover, the extension of those possessions would mean the spread of Protestantism; and Gustavus Adolphus was as earnest a Protestant as Cromwell, to whom he has often been compared. So he made his plunge, and quickly proved himself as brilliant a soldier as Cromwell.

"We have got a new little enemy," said the Emperor Ferdinand scornfully when he heard that the Swedes were coming; but he had reason to change his tone when they came. The Swedish soldiers were a rabble to look upon; but they were commanded by a man of genius who was also an innovator in the art of war, possessed of improved cannon and improved

muskets, and markedly the superior of his antagonists in mobility and in his power of maintaining discipline. He smashed Tilly and marched all over Germany, winning battle after battle, forbidding his men to plunder, and establishing liberty of conscience. "We will show our enemies," he said, "that we are honest men and honourable gentlemen."

It was a meteoric career, brilliant but brief. The end of it came, in 1632, when Gustavus Adolphus led his army against Wallenstein's entrenchments at Lützen,—a battle in which the religious character of the war was strongly emphasised. The day began with the singing of hymns in which the King himself joined lustily: "Our God is a strong tower," and "Fear not, little flock," and "Jesus, the Saviour, who was the conqueror of death." Then, in the interval between the issuing of the orders and the charge, the King knelt and prayed: "In God's name, Jesus, give us to-day to fight for the honour of Thy holy name." And then forward,—to victory, but also to death! A fog descended on the battlefield, and Gustavus Adolphus found himself alone in the midst of a squadron of the enemy's cuirassiers. He went down, shot first in the arm and then in the back. "Who are you?" they asked him. "I *was* the King of Sweden," he answered faintly; and then a cuirassier shot him through the head, and the fruits of the victory which he had gained were gathered in by

Bernard of Weimar, who succeeded to the command.

That was when Christina was six; and the war had still a course of sixteen years to run,—a period, as already indicated, of ever-increasing anarchy and horror. There is no need for any further recitation of its vicissitudes,—such matters belong to history, and not to Christina's life. One must merely insist that the great deeds of Gustavus Adolphus gave Sweden a place in the European Concert very different from that which she holds to-day.

Sweden was then a Power, and one of the greatest of the Powers; for the Powers by which Sweden is now overshadowed had not yet found themselves and developed their potential strength. Germany, as well as Italy, was little more than a geographical expression, destined to wait many a long day for its unification. Russia had hardly begun to come into the comity of nations; and Poland, not yet partitioned,—was a thorn in the side of her neighbours. Even with her present extent of territory Sweden would have been more important then than now; and Swedish territory, as a fact, stretched a good deal farther then than now. There was an overseas Swedish Empire on the opposite side of the Baltic, where now are the coasts of Finland and Prussia.

So that Sweden counted almost equally with France and Spain,—a great deal of what now is Belgium being then the Spanish Netherlands;

and that meant, of course, that Swedish statesmen, as well as Swedish soldiers, counted. Not only did Gustavus Adolphus, at his hour, dominate Europe almost as Napoleon was afterwards to dominate it. His Chancellor, Oxenstiern, thanks to his victories, could negotiate as an equal even with Cardinal Richelieu.

Such was the condition of things, in Europe and in Sweden, when Christina came to the throne,—being crowned in the year of the battle of Marston Moor. It was beginning to be the condition of things in the year of her birth, which was the second year of the reign of our own Charles I. That modicum of history is necessary to her biographer's setting of the stage. The stage set, he is free to go back and tell her story from the beginning.

CHAPTER III

Marriage of Gustavus Adolphus to Marie-Eléonore of Brandenburg—Birth of Christina—Anecdotes of her infancy—Death of Gustavus Adolphus at the battle of Lützen—His instructions to Oxenstiern concerning the education of his daughter—Christina recognised as his successor—The Regency

The wealth of the Rhenish vineyards and the pride of the Rhenish prelates were not the only things which attracted the attention of Gustavus Adolphus during his journey through Germany. He was also charmed by the fair face of Marie-Eléonore, the eldest daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg, and he married her in 1620,—two years after the beginning of the Thirty Years War, but some time before he himself decided to take part in it. He chose her, according to Christina, because she was "the most eligible of the Protestant Princesses of the period, to whom his religion limited his choice"; and Christina added, with the detachment of a critic rather than the affection of a daughter—

"This Princess, who was not without beauty, and possessed the good qualities looked for in her sex, lived with the King on sufficiently pleasant terms in a union which nothing

marred except the lack of an heir to secure the succession."

It is faint praise; and one can read a good deal between the lines of it. A lack of sympathy is indicated: something more than the lack of sympathy which is almost normal between the younger and the older generations; an echo, evidently, of a lack of sympathy which had subsisted between the husband and the wife.

Gustavus Adolphus was a great man and a strong man: a man of ideals as well as a man of action. Marie-Eléonore had no endowment but her beauty and her family connections. Personally, she was colourless and insignificant: a silly woman who got sillier as she grew older; the sort of woman who would have been quite innocently happy in a doll's house. Gustavus Adolphus was fond enough of her in his way, but had no illusions about her. She counted for no more in his life—and had no larger vision of the events of her time—than if he had been a Sultan and she the favourite beauty of his harem; and she loved her husband pretty much as such a beauty might have loved her master. She suffered, as we shall see, from nerves, and became morbid to the point of eccentricity: a point on which it is necessary to insist when we are looking for the hereditary influences which helped to make Christina what she became.

Christina flattered herself that she was, in a

special sense, her father's child; and the flattery of others confirmed her in that opinion. In sheer cleverness, as students understand the word, she probably surpassed her father: beyond question she was more variously accomplished. She inherited many masculine traits from him—some of them already indicated; and she had much of his energy, though she expended it otherwise. But her nature had also a nervous strain, bequeathed by a neurasthenic mother, though she did not know it, and emphasised by incidents of her up-bringing of which we shall have to speak,—the blending of the influences producing that brilliant example of the neurosis of the North of which we have spoken.

Her mother had borne two daughters before her; but they had died in infancy. The third child, said the astrologers — for those were the days when people always inquired what the astrologers had to say—would be a boy; and it seemed, for a moment, that they had guessed correctly. The women in attendance were deceived by the infant's vigour and lusty cries. They spread the false report, and feared that the King would be furiously angry with them when they came back to correct it,—his sister Catherine handing the child to him, so that he might satisfy himself, by ocular evidence, of the error and the grounds for it. But he made no trouble, and even seemed quite gratified—

"Let us thank God, my sister" (Christina reports him as saying). "I hope my daughter will be as good as a son to me. Since God has given her, may God preserve her!"

He added that "she ought to be clever since she has taken us all in"; and Christina, relating the story in her fragmentary *Memoirs*, goes on to render her own thanks to God for having made her of the weaker sex,—albeit a virile member of it. "My sex," she writes, addressing herself to God, "has been Your means of preserving me from the vices and debaucheries of the country in which I was born"; and she continues, going into details—

"If it had been Your will that I should be born a man, perhaps the habits of the country and the example of my companions would have corrupted me. I might perhaps have drowned in drink, as so many others do, all the virtues and talents which You have given me. Very likely, too, my ardent and impetuous temperament would have led me into embarrassing relations with women from which it would have been difficult for me to extricate myself. . . . At any rate, there would have been a danger that the society of women would have taken up the time which, having been devoted to study and the search for Truth, has brought me nearer to You."

A curiously exaggerated manifesto of the

pride of sex, and one to which the test of evidence shall be applied as we proceed. Meanwhile—

"The Queen, my mother, who had the weaknesses as well as the virtues of her sex, was inconsolable. She could not endure me, she said, because I was a girl and was ugly,—wherein she told the truth, for I was as dusky as a little Moor. My father, on the contrary, was very fond of me; and I responded to his affection in many precocious ways. It seemed to me that I understood the differences between their qualities and their feelings, and was able to do justice to both of them, even in the cradle."

Christina further relates that she was dropped on the floor as a baby; and she was fully persuaded that she was dropped on purpose, in the belief that her mother would be glad to hear of her death as the result of what could be called an accident. One has no means of judging whether the suspicion was well founded; one only knows that the consequence of the fall was a permanent, though not a very conspicuous, deformity. Throughout Christina's life her dresses had to be so cut as to conceal the fact that one of her shoulders was a little higher than the other.

Meanwhile the King delighted in every precocious trait and, more particularly, in every indication that his little girl had the spirit of a

boy. She tells us what happened when, as a child of two, she was saluted by the guns of the fortress of Calmar—

"There was some hesitation because of the fear of frightening a baby as important as I was; and the Governor, not wishing to fail in his duty, asked what were the King's orders. The King, after hesitating for a moment, said: 'Fire! She is a soldier's daughter, and must get used to the sound of guns.' So the order was obeyed, and the salute was duly fired. I was with the Queen in her carriage; and instead of being frightened, as children of that tender age generally are, I laughed and clapped my hands, and, not being yet able to speak, expressed my delight as best I could by signs, and indicated that I wanted them to fire again. My father's affection for me was greater than ever after that. He hoped that I was destined to be as brave as he was himself."

He was never to know anything about that, however; for Christina was only four when Gustavus Adolphus set out on the campaign from which he was not to return. He caused the country and the army to swear allegiance to her before he went; and she plucked at his beard to make him listen to a farewell speech which her nurses had taught her—

"When he noticed that, he took me in his

arms and kissed me, unable to restrain his tears. Or so I have been told by persons who were present, who also assure me that I cried so bitterly for three whole days that I hurt my eyes and very nearly ruined my sight which, like his, was extremely weak. My tears were regarded as of evil omen, as I was a child who hardly ever cried."

Another evil omen was the cessation of the flow of a river, believed always to cease to flow on the eve of the death of a King of Sweden; and Gustavus Adolphus himself predicted his own death in his farewell harangue—

"The pitcher which goes often to the well is broken at last. So it will be with me. I have faced many dangers for my country's good, and have never shrunk from imperilling my life. By God's grace my life has so far been spared; but I shall lose it in the end."

And so to Lützen, where, as we have seen, he fell, praying, as well as fighting, hard. He fought and prayed, from Christina's ultimate point of view, on the wrong side; but she was too proud of him to despair, for that reason, of the salvation of his soul, though she felt that she must express her hopes in the guarded phraseology of Rome. "It may be, Lord," we find her writing, "that a ray of Thy triumphant grace may have descended to crown him at the last moment of his

life." And she adds, with the same sort of piety: "Whether that was so or not, we must bow to Thy just and eternal decrees, and admire and worship them."

That was when Christina was six. There had, of course, to be a Regency: an office which was placed in commission under the direction of the Grand Chancellor, Oxenstiern. Gustavus Adolphus had made every provision for the event; and his instructions to Oxenstiern, drawn up in the midst of campaigns, were now produced, and showed that he had taken the measure of Marie-Eléonore's capacity—

"He bade him serve, honour, and assist the Queen, his wife, and try to comfort her in her trouble, but never, on any account, to permit that Princess to have anything to say in political affairs, or in the matter of my education. Those had always been his orders, and he now confirmed them and expected them to be carried out."

It was a wise stipulation, Christina thought; and historians have not ventured to contradict her. Marie-Eléonore was affectionate, but foolish; people liked her, but did not respect her; and there was a Republican party in Sweden. It was easy to persuade the Republicans to be loyal to a helpless child; it might have been difficult to persuade them to be loyal to a silly woman, reputed, rightly or wrongly,

to be as vain as she was empty-headed. So the debate on the propriety of proclaiming a Republic was practically closed when Christina was taken by the hand and led into the presence of the Assembly. Her personal likeness to her father settled the matter—

"She is his very image," they cried. "She has the nose, the eyes, the brow of Gustavus Adolphus. She shall be our Queen."

And with that they proclaimed her Queen, with a unanimous voice, and set her on the throne; and one of her first ceremonial appearances on the throne warmed their hearts to enthusiasm.

She had to receive a Mission from Russia, sent to negotiate for the renewal of an old treaty; and there were doubts whether she would receive it with a sufficiently dignified demeanour. The Russians of those days were, in appearance at all events, barbarians, horribly hirsute, and strangely and wonderfully apparelled. A little child might very well be frightened by them, as by Bogey Men or Wild Men from Borneo. So the Regents implored Christina not to be afraid—

"Their want of confidence in me hurt me; and I asked them indignantly: 'What is there to be afraid of?' They told me that the Russians were dressed quite differently from us,

that they had long beards, that they were terrible persons, and that there were a great many of them, but that I must not be frightened. It so happened that the Ministers with me on that occasion were the Grand Constable and the Grand Admiral, who, themselves, wore long beards. So I laughed, and said : ' Suppose they have beards—what of that ? You have beards, and I am not afraid of you. Why should I be afraid of them ? Tell me what I have to do, and leave the rest to me.' And I kept my word. I received my visitors, seated on the throne, in the customary manner, with a demeanour so self-possessed and majestic that, instead of being frightened, as other children are, on similar occasions, I made the Ambassadors feel what all men feel when they are brought in contact with the great ; and my subjects were delighted, and admired my manner, as people admire every trifling trait on the part of children whom they love."

That was in 1633, when Christina was seven. We may allow for a little exaggeration ; but the story at least shows us that Christina, like her mother, was vain, though she was not vain of the same things. She was no less proud of having been a great queen than of having forsaken grandeur for the sake of independence and self-development. But that is to anticipate. Our immediate business is with Christina's meeting with her mother.

Marie-Eléonore had accompanied Gustavus Adolphus on his campaigns; and now, in 1633, she returned to Sweden, bringing his coffin with her. "I kissed her," Christina writes. "She shed floods of tears, and nearly stifled me in her embrace." And then there were memorial services and sermons; which sermons were "harder to bear than the King's death," for which, as nearly two years had passed since it occurred, Christina was already consoled.

And then began that education which was to be one of the influences helping to make Christina a neurasthenic.

CHAPTER IV

Christina's childhood—Her morbid life with her mother—Her education taken out of her mother's hands—Brought up like a boy—Her precocity—Her scepticism—Her training in political philosophy

THERE was no affectation in Marie-Eléonore's grief,—if it was hysterical, it was also sincere. It might almost be said that she was in love with sorrow as some women are in love with love. There are two classes of shallow persons,—those who are callous, and those who lack the power of self-control ; and Marie-Eléonore was of the latter sort. A funeral was as welcome an emotional occasion to her as a wedding,—a memorial service as welcome an emotional occasion as a funeral. Two years after her husband's death she was still revelling in the luxury of woe,—refusing to look forward to the responsibilities of the years to come,—prolonging lamentation with the obstinate intensity of the neurotic.

She demanded that Gustavus Adolphus's body should lie in state in a Stockholm church, in a place where she could always see it. She had his heart enshrined in a box and placed at the head of her bed, so that she could weep before it daily. The Senate and the Clergy

felt that they must interfere if only for the sake of her peace of mind ; but even so their trouble with her was not ended. She stormed and screamed at the proposal to deprive her of the charge of her child ; and her Ministers yielded, for a time at least, to her unceasing supplications. Christina's own period of mourning was over,—she was only eight, and two years seem an eternity at that age ; but her mother nevertheless took her to live in a palace as lugubrious as a mortuary chapel—

" As soon as she arrived, she shut herself up in her apartment, which was draped with black hangings from the ceiling to the floor. The windows were covered with curtains of the same dark material. We could hardly see there ; and the wax candles which burned there by day as well as night revealed only the symbols of her mourning. Day or night, she never ceased to weep. . . . I had the highest respect for her and her tender affection ; but I felt sorely troubled and embarrassed when, in spite of my tutors, she insisted upon monopolising me. . . . There were some disputes with the Regents on the subject ; but they allowed her to do as she liked for some time, in view of their great regard for her, feeling that, as she had been excluded from the Regency, this indulgence was her due. . . . She loved me very tenderly, saying that I was the living image of the late King ; but the very force of

her love reduced me to despair. She made me sleep with her, and never let me out of her sight. It was with the greatest difficulty that she could be persuaded to let me have a room to myself in which to learn my lessons."

Whereupon Christina, looking back upon her education, and moralising upon it, comments—

"But You, Lord, turned the weaknesses of the Queen, my mother, to my advantage. The constraint and embarrassment which I felt in her society increased my zeal for study, and so were the cause of the great and astonishing progress which I made. For study was my sole pretext for escaping from the Queen, my mother, and from the melancholy apartment for which I conceived so violent a distaste."

She adds an anecdote which further illustrates the indiscretion of her up-bringing. Her mother pressed her to drink wine and beer,—beverages of which she detested the taste, as children of her age so often do. Water was actually withheld from her; and then she refused to drink anything at all, with the obstinacy of a hunger-striking suffrage-seeker. In the end she took to drinking the dew which was collected for her mother to use as toilet water, raiding it secretly every day after dinner. The toilet water was missed; and Christina was spied upon, and caught and whipped—

"The Queen-Dowager" (Christina comments) "had many good qualities; but she had none of the qualities which are necessary for a reigning sovereign, and it was impossible for her to teach me the things which she did not know."

Marie-Eléonore, indeed, showed herself as silly a woman in her amusements as in her methods of education; and Christina was quite as eager to escape from them as from the overwhelming pageantry of woe—

"The Queen-Mother liked to surround herself with jesters and dwarfs, as is the fashion in Germany. Her rooms were always full of them. It was intolerable to me; for I have always had a perfect horror of these ridiculous freaks. So I was delighted when lesson-time called me to the schoolroom. There was never any need to put pressure on me. I went to my lessons with unimaginable joy even earlier than the appointed time, and studied for six hours in the morning and another six in the evening, taking holidays only on Saturdays and Saints' days."

Such were the scenes in which Christina passed her impressionable years,—roughly speaking from her eighth until her tenth birthday: a morbid home from which she escaped only to work (if she does not exaggerate) twelve hours a day. The foundations of a neurotic

character could not have been more surely laid. It is not surprising that the Regents presently realised that something was wrong, and put their heads together in earnest debate to consider what had better be done,—moved thereto, not only by the eccentricities enumerated, but by others also. For in spite of her mourning, which she seemed anxious to prolong for ever, Marie-Eléonore was both extravagant and proud. She clamoured for money at a time when all the resources of Sweden were needed for the expenses of the war; and she also demanded that two members of the Council, under whose authority Gustavus Adolphus had placed her, should be required to wait on her at table.

That was too much for them. In particular, it was too much for the haughty Grand Chancellor, Oxenstiern, who had now, in 1636, returned from Germany. At his instance, therefore, the question of carrying out to the letter the instructions which Gustavus Adolphus had given was formally posed; and the course of the discussion was uncomplimentary, as well as unfavourable, to Marie-Eléonore—

"It is necessary for the young Queen to be educated in royal virtues. This cannot be done while she is with the Queen-Dowager. Therefore she must be separated from her."

"It is better to stem the brook than the

flood. The general welfare is the supreme law. I vote for the separation."

"We often see parents, out of love for their children, send them away for their benefit. Even monkeys do so with their young."

"We have left the young Queen with the Queen-Mother in the hope of some improvement; but things get worse and worse. Christina is brought up, if not in actual bad habits, at least not in such a way, or among such men, as she ought to be. Neither fear of God nor love of her country is instilled into her mind, nor is she taught the duties of government. She must, therefore, be taken away from her mother."

Such were a few of the typical sentiments expressed: some of them less discourteous than others, but none of them positively cordial or respectful. Marie-Eléonore, from the point of view of the Council, was not only a silly woman and a bad mother, but also a bad patriot. So they put her aside by a unanimous vote, and took Christina's education into their own hands. From the age of ten onwards, she was to be educated strictly on the lines which Gustavus Adolphus had prescribed. What those lines were she herself tells us—

"The King had enjoined them to educate me

as a man, and to teach me everything that a prince ought to know, if he is to reign worthily. He declared emphatically that he did not wish me to be inspired with any of the characteristic sentiments of my sex, except in so far as honour and modesty were concerned. For the rest, he wished me to be a prince, and to receive the instruction which is proper for princes."

A system which, Christina says, suited her perfectly, and enabled her to develop on the lines most natural to her—

"My personal inclinations seconded his designs in the most marvellous manner; for I had an unconquerable antipathy to all women's sayings and doings. Women's clothes and women's ways were alike insupportable to me. I never wore their head-dresses. I never took any care of my complexion, my figure, or my person generally; and, save in the matters of cleanliness and honourable conduct, I cherished a profound contempt for everything appertaining to my sex. I could not endure dresses with trains, but much preferred short skirts, especially in the country. I was so clumsy at all kinds of needlework that it was quite impossible to teach me how to do it. But, on the other hand, I was marvellously quick at learning languages and lessons of every kind."

She was hardy, too, as well as clever; or, at

all events, she tried to be, and made believe to be. She could ride and handle the weapons of sport and war. She could dispense with sleep, and did not care what she ate; she was indifferent to heat and cold; she was fond of horses and dogs; she took long walks, and nothing could tire her—

"The gentlemen and ladies in attendance on me were made desperate by the way in which I tired them out. I gave them no rest either by day or by night; and when my ladies tried to dissuade me from living such a fatiguing life, I laughed at them, and said: 'If you are feeling sleepy, go to bed. I have no need of you.'"

There are not wanting those who have inferred from the boyishness of the girl and the subsequent mannishness of the woman that Christina was, in actual physiological fact, a boy in petticoats; but that is nonsense which may safely be ignored. No motive existed for the deception; though a motive might be found for the opposite pretence that the girl was a boy. The autobiography is, throughout, feminine, if not womanly; and there are medical proofs —a physician's daily reports on the state of Christina's health—which remove all possible doubt.

The doubt, indeed, could only have been entertained in an age in which exceptional as well as normal women acquiesced, as a matter

of course, in the well-defined, old-fashioned limitations of womanly activity, accepted, without a murmur, their confinement to the domestic sphere, or only revolted against it, if they did revolt, in order to become polyandrous. From the point of view of later ages,—from the point of view, in particular, of a Girton-going, suffrage-seeking, hockey-playing, hunger-striking generation,—Christina is intelligible enough. To such a generation neither her intellectual nor her athletic interests present any mystery. It can understand her temperament—of which more presently—as well as her tastes; and it may be supposed to know something also of those avenging nerves through which sex is apt to reassert its claim to a consideration which it has not received.

We must think of Christina, therefore, in her youth at all events, as a sort of tomboy, who was also exceedingly clever, devoured by an intense curiosity to know whatever there was to be known; and we must picture her educated somewhat as girls are educated at the Bedford College for Women,—but without any sort of home life, and without any girl companions. She was taken away from her mother when she was ten. Her aunt who, in some degree—but only in a slight degree,—was allowed to take her mother's place, died when she was thirteen. She was not then allowed to return to her mother; and Marie-Eléonore, indignant at what seemed to her the denial of her natural

rights, shook the dust of Sweden off her feet, and paid a long visit to Denmark. Thereafter—and perhaps even before that date—Christina's education was almost entirely in the hands of men.

They naturally did not teach her to cook, or to embroider tapestry, or to sing, or to play the harpsichord; they did not even teach her to do her hair prettily, or to be the best-dressed woman in Sweden, or to protect her complexion with cosmetics. On the contrary, they taught her to ride, to shoot, to hunt, and even to swear; and in the schoolroom they forced her, as children are forced nowadays when everything seems to depend upon their passing difficult examinations,—endeavouring to make her, prematurely, a theologian, a linguist, and a political philosopher.

The programme was drafted by the Nobles and Clergy when she was nine. A letter which she wrote when she was ten shows that no time had been lost in carrying it into execution—

"We, the undersigned, promise and bind ourselves hereby to speak Latin with our tutor in future. We made the promise before, but we did not keep it. Henceforth, with God's help, we will do as we have promised; and we will, God willing, begin on Monday. In order that there may be no doubt about it, we have written this letter with our own hand, and we sign it.

"CHRISTINA.

"Given at Stockholm, October 28, 1639."—

It may not have been the best kind of education for her,—it was too purely intellectual, and it left too little to Nature; but it was a kind of education which she liked,—in which she may almost be said to have revelled. And she was a credit to her instructors,—they would have thought very highly of her at the Bedford College for Women, or even at Girton, or Newnham, or Somerville Hall. She saluted her troops, on horseback, like a soldier, and sustained the rôle by twirling an imaginary moustache. She mastered an incredible number of languages: French, German, Italian, Latin, and, ultimately, Greek. She read Livy, Terence, Cicero, Sallust, Tacitus, and even Polybius and Thucydides; and she could write both the dead and the living languages as well as read them.

Her theological tutor was the only one of her instructors who had any reason to be dissatisfied with her. Though she learnt what he taught her, she was indisposed to take everything for granted,—especially when she found that the mysteries of dogma were wrapped in clouds of uncertainty quite different from those which enveloped the obscure points of grammar. She was very indignant when she failed to get plain answers to her direct questions concerning the details of the programme for the Day of Judgment. She suggested that, as these matters could not be properly explained to her, there might be some

mistake about them; and then there was trouble—

"He administered a severe rebuke, saying that it was an awful sin and an act of impiety even to entertain such thoughts, and that, if ever I said anything of the sort to him again, he would ask my governess to birch me."

Whereupon Christina, according to her own account, replied with dignity—

"I promise not to say anything of the sort again; but I am not going to be birched. If anything of that kind is done to me, you will all be sorry for it."

"I said that," she concludes, "with such a queenly air that he trembled before me,"—which may, or may not, be true.

There was no similar trouble, however,—and no need for any equivalent reprimands,—at the hours given to the study of politics. That subject was taught to Christina by the Grand Chancellor, Oxenstiern, himself; and, if she was to be instructed in such matters at all at such a tender age, she could not have had a better tutor. He was possibly the ablest, and certainly the most honest, statesman of his period. Twice, in the course of that Thirty Years War, to which we are continually being brought back, he had saved the fortunes of Sweden when they

seemed at a low ebb : once immediately after the death of Gustavus Adolphus, and then again after the disastrous battle of Nordlingen. He had resisted all attempts to bribe and corrupt him ; he had negotiated with Cardinal Richelieu on equal terms ; he had been addressed by the King of France as " my cousin."

Of his policy and his conduct of the war we will say what needs to be said presently ; for the moment, we will only consider him in the character of Christina's tutor. Day after day, from the time when she was ten, or a little more, he came daily to her schoolroom to talk to her about politics and contemporary history, and train her in statecraft ; teaching her to speak of " my " armies, " my " victories, " my " policy,—and then, by a natural transition, of " my " greatness and " my " glory. Never, one imagines, has so young a Queen been so coached in her royal duties and responsibilities by so great a man, before or since ; for Queen Victoria was much older when Lord Melbourne rendered her similar services, while Isabella of Spain was in the hands of men of far inferior capacity and influence. Christina's own account of the lessons may fittingly conclude the record of her education—

" I took the keenest pleasure " (she writes) " in hearing him talk. There was no other lesson, and no amusement, which I did not gladly leave in order to listen to him. He, on

his part, if I may say so without doing violence to modesty, took the greatest pleasure in instructing me. We often spent three, or four, or more hours together. More than once this great man had to express his admiration for a child in whom You, O Lord, had implanted such talents, such a desire to learn, and such an aptitude for learning,—qualities which he admired without understanding them, for they are very rare at such a tender age."

Whence it seems clear that, if Oxenstiern helped Christina to become brilliant, he did not prevent her from becoming vain ; and, indeed, it would have been hard for her to help being vain when, at the age of thirteen, she was allowed to attend Cabinet Councils and give her opinion on the highest matters of State.

CHAPTER V

Coronation of Christina—Her love of peace—Conclusion of the Thirty Years War—Her determination never to marry—Her own estimate of her sentimental characteristics—Her romantic attachment to her cousin, Charles Gustavus—Her breach with him—Her romantic attachment to Magnus de la Gardie

In 1644, when she was eighteen, Christina was crowned and permitted to dispense with Regents. They flattered her by proclaiming her "King"; but it would be pedantry to speak of her otherwise than as Queen. No one has ever done so. *E donna.* Everybody felt that, though it was left to the Pope to say it. For her contemporaries, as for posterity, Christina's sex was much too interesting a fact to be ignored. Womanly or not, she was conspicuously feminine; and it was because she was a woman that she was hailed as wonderful: the marvellous Minerva of the North, and also its Queen of Sheba, to whom the great scholar and divine, Bochart, compared her in an epigram which may be rendered thus—

"Two Queens—no more—have earned immortal fame:
From distant quarters of the world they came.
Of one's renown the Holy Scriptures tell;
The other 'neath the polar star doth dwell.

'Tis idle further to prolong the verse,
Asking whose praise 'tis worthier to rehearse:
The one came far a learned King to meet;
But scholars group them at the other's feet."

That was written later, however, after Christina had formed her Court of Divines and Scholars. She began to make herself interesting to Europe by forming it very soon after her Coronation, but not quite immediately. For the moment she had other preoccupations: foreign wars and internal troubles. Apart from the Thirty Years War, there was a "little war" with Denmark; and there were also difficulties about the collection of the taxes. The Nobles held that it was contrary to their dignity to be taxed; and the Clergy maintained that they could not part with money without impairing their spiritual usefulness. In the view of both these Estates of the Realm, the proper people to pay taxes were the peasants and the farmers, who, on their part, murmured against the exactions, and were too poor to find, under any pressure, as much money as the war required.

To some extent, no doubt, war, in those days, supported itself; victory being followed by plunder. In the Thirty Years War, however, plunder ceased to be profitable; most of the available oranges being sucked quite dry. Glory and territory, of course, could be gained; but both were barren. Though Sweden, on the whole, did well, and the hour of emergency generally brought forth the man—Baner, and

Jacob de la Gardie, and Torstensen, and other brilliant generals—one reads of mutinies because the pay was in arrears, and of Swedish soldiers, while marching from victory to victory, obliged to barter their arms and accoutrements for bread.

Horrors apart—and there is no need to repeat the tale of horrors—the sooner such a war was ended, the better even for the victors; and it stands to Christina's credit that she saw further than her soldiers, her clergy, and her statesmen, and pressed for peace. The soldiers wanted war because war was their diversion as well as their trade; the clergy wanted it because their dogmas were at issue, and their skins were not. Oxenstiern would seem to have had for this particular war something of the affection of a parent for a favourite child. But Christina had a woman's intuition that the war was a nuisance, and was doing no good to anybody; and she had character enough to put her foot down, and insist that it should be stopped.

We may skip the details; enough that Christina, young as she was, not only withstood her Ministers to the face, but also intrigued behind their backs, and got her way. Peace with Denmark was concluded, in 1645, when she was nineteen; and peace with all the Powers involved in the Thirty Years War was arranged by the Treaty of Westphalia, signed, in 1648, when she was twenty-two. Then Sweden got a badly needed breathing-time, and Christina was

free for other thoughts besides those which public anxieties inspired: free to establish herself as the Northern Goddess of Wisdom, and form her Court of Scholars, inviting the wise men of all countries to come and worship her; free also to admire, and be admired by, younger and more tender and attractive courtiers. Broadly speaking, she gained her freedom—or a portion of it—just about the time when she was old enough to use it; and her individual activities—scholarly, sentimental, and religious—began simultaneously, or nearly so, though we must treat them separately in order to avoid confusion.

Christina was to be, like our own Elizabeth, a Virgin Queen; but that does not imply, any more than it implied in Elizabeth's case, that sentiment was to play no part in her life. On the contrary, Essex and the others were to have their analogues in her career; and her own view was, not that her temperament was cold, but that her self-command was great. She puts it thus—

"My ardent and impetuous temperament inclined me to love, not less than to ambition. To what disasters might not this inclination have brought me, if Thy saving grace had not employed my very faults for my correction! But my ambition, my pride which made me incapable of submitting my will to that of

another, but inspired me with scorn for everybody and everything, have preserved and protected me; and I owe to Thy grace the delicacy and refinement which have been my safeguards against desires fraught with so much peril for Thy glory and my happiness. However near I approached to the precipice, Thy all-powerful hand held me back and prevented me from falling. Thou knowest that, whatever envy and slander may say, I am innocent of all the secret sins with which they have charged me in order to blacken my character. I solemnly declare that, if I had not been born a girl, the tendencies of my temperament would assuredly have caused me to lead a shockingly disorderly life; but Thou hast made me prefer honour and glory to pleasure. You have guarded me from the disasters and temptations to which that ardent temperament of mine and the opportunities of indulgence which my position commanded exposed me. If I had felt myself too weak to resist temptation, I should have married; but I trusted Thy grace, and the strength which Thou hast given me, and, finding that I could dispense with even the most legitimate pleasures, I did not attempt to overcome my unconquerable aversion to marriage."

With more to the same effect,—the confession, being packed with repetitions, has been abbreviated; and the inference which it is most natural to draw from it is hardly that

which Christina intended. The combat which it depicts between the temptations of sex and the pride of virtue is not very convincing; and it is the less convincing because it was written at a time when Christina was living with a Roman Cardinal in circumstances which gave calumny a handle. Not only may she be supposed to have written as she did because she wished to defend the Cardinal's reputation as well as her own. One also finds something characteristically neurotic in her desire to represent herself as at once the chosen daughter of the Church and a woman who might have rivalled Messalina if she had followed the promptings of her nature.

A woman who has in her the making of a Messalina does not, as a rule, find the idea of marriage repugnant; nor is it normal for a woman to whom the idea of marriage is repugnant to proclaim herself a potential Messalina. What the conjunction of the two boasts really suggests is that the imagination rather than the temperament was ardent; and that the ardour of the imagination was linked with nervous coyness and apprehensions. On no other psychological assumption can we explain the three salient facts: that Christina declined marriage in general, as well as in particular, with the obstinacy of a woman affirming a principle above and beyond discussion; that she lived without "grand passions"; that she nevertheless had (or gave

the world good reason to believe that she had) lovers.

Love, in fact, would seem to have been for her a matter of the imagination rather than the senses; of infatuation rather than passion. It was more important to her that men should understand her than that they should desire her; she was far more responsive to flattery and sympathy than to ardour. Hence the hold obtained by an agreeable priest, who was also a man of the world, upon a heart which had been scared by the adventurous advances of his juniors. In the presence of those advances Christina's case was somewhat like that of the child on the seabeach, easily lured a little way into the water, paddling joyously in the shallows, but terrified by the aspect of the first big foaming wave. For such, sometimes, is the neurosis of the North,—especially when the intellect has been overcultivated.

But, at first, Christina did not know herself,—she had to find herself out by degrees, as we all must, if we can. It may be questioned, indeed, whether her comprehension of herself was ever quite complete; and, in her childhood and her youth, it was inevitably imperfect. Like other children, she acquired such self-knowledge as came to her by experience and by experiments; and so we find her, at a reasonably early age, engaging in experimental love affairs.

At the age of seventeen she was in love with her cousin, Charles Gustavus, the son of her

Aunt Catherine. They had been boy and girl together,—one knows the sort of first love that propinquity engenders in those impressionable years. The need for romance is felt; and the romance which smiling circumstances offer seems unimaginably romantic. Passion has nothing to do with it,—the imagination is its single source. And then the years pass, and the imagination strays, and contact with new realities pulls it up, and the first romance, ceasing to seem romantic, dies away, albeit leaving certain sentimental memories behind it. It was thus—or very nearly thus—in Christina's romance with her cousin.

A love letter remains to show us how very romantic the romance was at its hour. Charles Gustavus was at the wars; and Christina wrote thus to him on January 5, 1644—

"Beloved Cousin,—I see by your letter that you do not venture to trust your thoughts to the pen. We may, however, correspond with all freedom, if you send me the key to a cipher, and compose your letters according to it, and change the seals, as I do with mine. Then the letters may be sent to your sister, the Princess Maria. You must take every precaution, for never were people here so much against us as now; but they shall never get their way, so long as you remain firm. They talk a great deal of the Elector of Brandenburg, but neither he, nor any one in the world, how-

ever rich he be, shall ever alienate my heart from you. My love is so strong that it can only be overcome by death, and if, which God forbid, you should die before me, my heart shall remain dead for every other, and my mind and affection shall follow you to eternity, there to dwell with you.

"Perhaps some will advise you to demand my hand openly; but I beseech you, by all that is holy, to have patience for some time, until you have acquired some reputation in the war, and until I have the crown on my head. I entreat you not to consider this time long, but to think of the old saying, 'He does not wait too long who waits for something good.' I hope, by God's blessing, that it is a good thing we both are waiting for."

It is a letter to be read carefully, for everything proper to love's young dream is contained in it: the secret engagement; the surreptitious correspondence; the vow of eternal fidelity; the appeal to Higher Powers. And the sequel, too, was in accordance with the rules. Jove, as we know, "laughs at lovers' perjuries"; and Jove was soon to be given cause for laughter. Christina grew older, and, realising a little more of the world about her, realised that there were other men in the world besides Charles Gustavus, and that Charles Gustavus was not the very gentle, perfect knight she had imagined.

In the first place, Charles Gustavus was not handsome; he was ugly, dumpy, thick-set, "common," as we should say, and not inappropriately nicknamed "the little burgomaster." In the second place, Charles Gustavus was coarse in his tastes and habits: a valiant soldier who rejoiced in war, but, in modern phraseology, a "beefy" and "beery" man. In the third place, Charles Gustavus was not "exclusive in his affections," but capable of consoling himself for Christina's absence in the arms of the maids of the inns. So that it is not long before we note a change in the tone of the correspondence—

"Do not take it ill that I owe it to myself not to let anything in the world disturb my peace."

"Do not fear that the expression of your feelings will displease me: as a proof of your regard they are pleasing to me, so long as you keep them within the bounds which are prescribed by your cousin and friend,

"CHRISTINA."

That is how she was writing a couple of years or so after the date of the love letter just quoted; and "love letters" would assuredly be the wrong term to apply to the later communications. Exactly what change in Christina's feelings they indicate it might be hard to say. One might pick phrases from them to suggest

that she mistrusted herself,—doubting her power to respond to this passion which found satisfaction in the embraces of her rivals, the chambermaids,—mysteriously fearing she knew not exactly what,—stiffening her attitude in order to keep her pride in being. But there was also another reason why her constancy broke down. Young Magnus de la Gardie—General Jacob de la Gardie's son—had now come into her life.

Young Magnus was young and brilliant—attractive in all the ways in which Charles Gustavus was unattractive—and of a very good family. His mother, the beautiful Ebba Brahé, of the family of Tycho Brahé, the astronomer, could boast that she had jilted Gustavus Adolphus himself,—not without reason. That Christian warrior was no St. Anthony in the presence of temptation; and Ebba, learning that he had yielded to temptation and diverted himself with a mistress while paying his court to her, declined to make allowances or listen to arguments, but threw him over as summarily as if he had been one of the humblest of his subjects. Then she married the general; and now her son, who had inherited her good looks, stood high in Christina's favour.

How high one cannot say for certain; but one of the first uses which she made of her royal prerogative was to push his fortunes without much regard to his merits, endowing him with great estates, and sending him as her Ambassador to Paris, where wicked tongues wagged maliciously—

"He spoke of his Queen in terms so passionate and respectful that it was easy to suspect in him a feeling more tender than that which he owed to her as a subject. . . . Some say that, if she had followed her own inclination, she would have married him."

So writes Mme de Motteville; but what she writes is gossip—the record of an impression—nothing more. One must set beside it the report of the French Ambassador of Stockholm—

"The Queen's love occupies only a portion of her heart. It does not affect her conduct, except perhaps in delaying the affection which the dictates of reason bid her conceive for Prince Charles Gustavus."

Even the Ambassador, however, wrote as an observer, not yet as a confidant; and we must make what we can of the situation in the light of the evidence,—and of the lack of it. There is ample proof of infatuation,—there is no proof whatever that Christina, as Baron de Bildt puts it, "passed the Rubicon." There is ample proof, too, that the infatuation was largely accountable for Christina's sudden coldness towards Charles Gustavus. She told Charles Gustavus so in later years; and Whitelocke, the British Ambassador, received information to the same effect from a Swedish Senator, who spoke of "the whisperings of Magnus de la Gardie to the

Queen that, when the Prince was in Germany, he was too familiar with some ladies." His intimacy with his sovereign must assuredly have been close, if he could breathe such suggestions in her ear at a time when she was only twenty-one and he was only twenty-five; and nothing is more credible than that he should have swaggered in Paris on the strength of that intimacy, dropping hints and encouraging inferences.

But that is no reason why we should draw the inference which he encouraged. Magnus de la Gardie may have boasted,—he may have felt sentimental in the act of boasting; but that is all. He married the Queen's cousin,—Charles Gustavus's sister,—with the Queen's approval. Ultimately, as we shall see, he quarrelled with Christina; and it will be time enough to consider, when we come to the quarrel, whether his language, under that ordeal, was that of a wronged lover or of a snubbed courtier. In the meantime we must note—what is significant—that this infatuation of Christina's, like all the infatuations except the first, was concurrent with vows of celibacy.

For, of course, the question of marriage could not, in her case, be evaded, but had to be faced and settled. The ecclesiastics of her kingdom represented to her that celibacy was "inconvenient"; though whether they meant inconvenient to the individual, or to the State, or to both, is not quite clear. The succession, at any rate, had to be secured; and, to that

end, various súitors were proposed : suitors from Denmark, from Germany, from Spain, from Poland, from elsewhere. Even our own Charles II. sent his portrait, though he was not encouraged to follow it in person ; while Philip IV. of Spain took such a matter-of-fact view of the negotiations that he invited Christina to choose between himself and his son,—only to be suppressed by the announcement that he must become a Lutheran before his proposal could even be laid before the Queen.

None of the courtships went so far that any kind of story arises out of them. The only suitor who had ever had a chance was Charles Gustavus ; and he had ceased to have a chance. At one time his suit was opposed by the clergy on the ground that marriages between cousins were undesirable. When they withdrew their objection—which the mere fact of its withdrawal sufficiently proves to have been hypocritical—Christina had changed her mind ; and now the infatuation for Magnus de la Gardie had intervened ; and the infatuation had been attended by the revelations already referred to concerning Charles Gustavus's proceedings with the maids of the inns in Germany.

It is said that she would have married Magnus de la Gardie if Oxenstiern had not told her that he was, in fact, her natural brother : the son of Gustavus Adolphus and the beautiful Ebba Brahé. It is possible that Oxenstiern may have said this,—it is possible that he may have told

the truth: those who like simple solutions may be tempted to seek in this discovery the explanation of Christina's revolt against the idea of matrimony. Her first lover unfaithful, and her second an impossible husband because the connection would be incestuous,—that, no doubt, would have been a combination calculated to shock a woman of her temperament into celibacy. The view may derive some support from the story told that, on the day of Magnus de la Gardie's marriage to her cousin, Christina said to the bride: "I give you one I may not take myself." There is a further indication which might support it in an enigmatical passage of a letter written to Magnus de la Gardie by Christina at the time of the subsequent quarrel—

"*You have yourself betrayed a secret which I had resolved to keep all my life, by showing that you were unworthy of the fortune I built for you.*"

The secret thus indicated *may* have been the secret of Magnus de la Gardie's birth,—which Christina *may* have had from Oxenstiern—who may have known it; but one cannot be sure. There is no real evidence one way or the other; and, in any case, Christina's aversion from marriage impresses one as temperamental, and not as the outcome of any particular disappointment: the result of excessive mental development at

the expense of the physique and the emotions. At all events she began to express that aversion early, and never ceased expressing it until the end. "How fine that is! I will be of that religion," she exclaimed as a child, when told of the Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the merit of virginity. At the age of twenty-two it pleased her to play in a masque in which she sustained the rôle of Diana, and broke Cupid's bow and arrows in pieces. Towards the end of her life she had a medal struck with the inscription: "I was born, lived, and died free." She told the French Ambassador that she would rather die than marry; and she left behind her several aphorisms in which the married state was held up to contempt and ridicule. For instance—

"One needs more courage to expose oneself to the misfortunes of marriage than to face those of war. I admire the nerve of those who marry; but people enter into this terrible contract, as they do so many other things in the course of their lives, without realising its significance or the engagements to which it commits them."

"Socrates used to say: 'Whether you marry or refrain from marrying, you will be sorry.' For my own part, I think that every one who marries will infallibly be sorry; but I see no reason why any one should be sorry

for not having married. I speak from experience."

How much (and how little) she meant the further story of her life may show. She certainly did not mean that she hated, and would always hate, all men because one or two men had treated her unkindly. On the contrary. The first infatuation was not to be, by any means, the last; and it was women, not men, whom Christina always professed to dislike "in the lump." She liked men, she used to say, not because they were men, but because they were not women. But still——

She would not marry,—nothing should induce her to marry. Marriage implied subjection,—she would give no man rights over her: rights which she once compared (using a coarse metaphor) to the peasant's right over the land which produced his crops. Least of all would she accord that right to a man like Charles Gustavus, who, in his genial, beefy, beery way, claimed the same right over other, base-born women,—for all the world as if he were a peasant possessed of several plots of land. Her soul rose in rebellion against the thought. And yet—one comes to a gentler feminine touch——

She was grateful to Charles Gustavus as her partner in the tentative beginnings of her sentimental life. He had taught her what she knew of love; he had touched her heart, though he had behaved unworthily. She owed him

something, and she would pay her debt. Though it was for her own sake, not for his, that she meant to remain single,—still she would name him the heir to her throne, and do what she could to induce her counsellors to accept the nomination. And so, after much parleying, it was arranged.

The advantage was not very obvious to him. There was no talk, as yet, of abdication; and, Christina being his junior, Charles Gustavus had no right to expect that he would live to come into his inheritance. So he sulked, and played the common comedy of the jilted lover, making melodramatic vows. He would shake the dust of Sweden from off his feet. Life having nothing more to offer him except the chance of death, he would quit his royal rank, take an assumed name, and serve as a soldier of fortune in a foreign army, etc. etc. But when the comedy failed to produce the desired impression, he ceased playing it, and accepted his privileged position for what it might be worth.

And Christina remained single; and our next task shall be to draw the picture of her Court, as contemporary observers saw it.

CHAPTER VI

Curiosity about Christina in Paris—Comments of Mme de Motteville — Character sketches of her: By Chanut, French Ambassador to Sweden; By the Jesuit, Father Mannerschied—Conclusions to be drawn—A Girton Girl on a throne

One of the effects of the Thirty Years War was an *entente* between Sweden and France. We have already seen Oxenstiern negotiating with Richelieu, who, being a statesman and a Frenchman first, and a Catholic and a Cardinal afterwards, favoured the Protestant cause in the material interest of his country. That was when Christina was a child; and the interview which then took place at Compiègne has no great bearing on her biography. Magnus de la Gardie's mission was another matter. He cut such a dash as no Swedish Ambassador had ever cut before; he swaggered and looked soulful when he talked about his Queen. Whence Paris, with its Athenian curiosity about all new things, began to be curious about Christina; and tongues at the French Court wagged freely. Mme de Motteville, Anne of Austria's lady-in-waiting, is our principal authority for the gossip.

We have already quoted from her the rumour

that Christina would have liked to marry her Ambassador, "but that the greatness of her soul would not permit her so to degrade herself." She also circulated a good many other rumours, not all of which hang together. There was the rumour, for instance, that Christina was "a libertine," and the opposing rumour that "she had neither the beauty nor the natural inclinations of a woman," and that, "instead of making men die of love for her, she made them die of shame." Even the great philosopher Descartes, it was whispered, died of shame because "she did not agree with his system of philosophy." Her letters, moreover, were remarkable for "the gallantry of her thoughts and the elegance of her style," even when she wrote in French,—"which language, as well as several others, she knew intimately." With the result that—

"She was credited with all the heroic virtues, and was ranked with the most illustrious women of antiquity. Every writer's pen was employed in her praise; and it was said that the most advanced sciences were for her what the needle and the spinning-wheel are for others of her sex. But fame is a great talker, and often goes beyond the limits of the truth."

The gossip shows us, of course, not what was true, but only what people were saying. All that it really proves, indeed, is that curiosity had been awakened, and that already, at the

age of twenty, Christina was a personage. People in general, and the Court and the Ministers in particular, wanted to know about her; and there was an obvious way of finding out,—to apply to Chanut, the French Ambassador in Sweden. So Chanut was instructed to send Christina's portrait; and he sent, together with the portrait, which Christina readily provided for the purpose, a kind of character sketch, or anecdotal photograph,—"doing" Christina, as modern royal personages sometimes consent to be "done," as a Celebrity at Home, in a really fine example of early society journalism.

Chanut had not, he said, presumed to "stare" or to pay too particular attention to Her Majesty's beauty; but he nevertheless began with a general appreciation of her manners and personal appearance—

"The expression of Her Majesty's countenance, whatever may be passing in her mind, is always serene and agreeable; though it is true that, occasionally, when she is displeased with what is said to her, clouds, as it were, gather on her brow, to the alarm of those on whom she fixes her gaze. Her voice, as a rule, is soft and low,—a voice which, however firm her utterance, is unmistakably that of a girl. Now and again, without apparent cause, she adopts a tone rather louder than is usual with her sex; but she soon, and insensibly, relapses to a more ordinary modulation.

"Her Majesty's height is a little below the average; but this would hardly have been noticeable if she had worn the high-heeled shoes which women generally wear. She does not, however; but, in order that she may be able to go about the Palace, or to walk, or to ride, more conveniently, she only wears shoes with a sole and a little black heel, like those of a man."

There is a faint suggestion here of an untidy woman slopping about in slippers; and neatness, as we shall learn from other witnesses,—as we have, in fact, already learnt from her own confession,—was not one of Christina's characteristics. Chanut, however, does not, for the moment, insist. The matter is not without importance to him: he cannot, as a Frenchman, be blind to such shortcomings in his consideration of a woman,—even if she be a woman of genius; but he feels that he must first dwell upon those unique gifts and accomplishments which have aroused the curiosity he has been called upon to gratify. People want to know whether Christina is religious,—he will tell them. So far as he can judge, she has "a loyal attachment to Christianity"; but she does not make any great public display of it. She views the theological bickerings of hostile sects with a toleration which almost amounts to indifference; and the elaborate ceremonies of Lutheran public worship obviously bore her.

They always bored her,—so much so that she

used to take her pet spaniel to church and play with it during the prayers, and was sometimes seen reading Virgil during the sermon; but the Ambassador does not give those details. He says, instead, that Christina appears more interested in philosophy than in theology; and he goes on to applaud her achievements in the domain of scholarship—

"She speaks Latin, French, German, Flemish, and Swedish; and she is learning Greek. Learned persons converse with her, in her leisure hours, of all that is most abstruse in the various sciences. Her intellect, eager for all kinds of knowledge, seeks information about everything. Hardly a day passes without her reading Tacitus,—an author whom she calls her game of chess, and whose style is absolutely intelligible to her, though perplexing to many of the erudite."

But it is not only in the study that she excels; she also shines in the Council Chamber,—and not only shines, but exercises real influence—

"Some people, it is true, attribute the deference of her Ministers to the fact that she is a woman, believing that the attraction of her sex compels involuntary submission to her will; but the truth is that her great authority is due to her great qualities, and that a king who evinced the same qualities would wield an equal influence."

As for her social graces—

"She hardly ever speaks to the ladies of her Court, for her addiction to sport and her interest in affairs of State leave her no time to engage in small talk with them. She does not seek their society; they only pay her formal visits; and then, after the interchange of the ordinary civilities, she leaves them to themselves in a corner, and turns to converse with men."

And even the men have to be on their metal. If they have nothing to say which is worth listening to, Christina "cuts the conversation short." So that high thinking is really the order of the day; and high thinking is an impediment to other occupations for which room should be found in every well-ordered life. High thinking deprives Christina of her sleep,—she is in bed, as a rule, for no more than five hours out of the twenty-four, though she gets so tired that she has to lie down for an hour or two after dinner; and high thinking is finally —a French reporter was bound to get back to that—an impediment to the toilet and to the arts of coquetry—

"She attaches very little importance to the adornment of her person,—her division of the day assigns no time to her toilet. It takes her only a quarter of an hour to dress; and, except on occasions of great ceremony, she merely

runs a comb through her hair and sticks a bit of ribbon in it. Untidy hair, it is true, does not suit her badly; but she cares so little for her complexion that neither in the sun, nor in the wind, nor in the rain—neither in the town nor in the country—does she ever wear either hat or veil. When she goes riding, a hat with feathers in it is her only protection from the weather; and no one who saw her in the hunting field, in her Hungarian riding-habit, with a man's collar round her neck, would ever take her for a queen. Unquestionably she carries this sort of thing too far,—there are times when one fears that it may be injurious to her health; but all these little eccentricities are as nothing when one thinks of her love for honour and virtue. Her great ambition, one may justly say, is to achieve fame through her personal merits rather than by her conquests; and she would rather owe her reputation to herself than to the valour of her subjects."

Such is the picture drawn by an admirer whose admiration was genuine, but not uncritical, in 1648. One may supplement it with another picture drawn, five years later, by the Jesuit, Father Mannerschied, the Spanish Ambassador's confessor. For him Christina is "a prodigy and one of the incomparable marvels of our age." He knew the Queen well, he says, and he will set down nothing which he has not seen with his own eyes. So he speaks of her

broad brow, her piercing look, her aquiline nose, and proceeds to draw his picture—

"There is nothing feminine about her except her sex. Her voice, her manner of speaking, her walk, her style, her ways are all quite masculine. I see her on horseback nearly every day. Though she rides on a side-saddle, she holds herself so well and is so light in her movements that, unless one were quite close to her, one would take her for a man."

He continues like the paragraphist of a Society paper; his next paragraph dealing with Christina's indifference to gorgeous apparel—

"Her riding-habit is a very cheap affair. I doubt whether it can have cost more than four or five ducats. At Court, too, she is always very quietly dressed. I have never seen her wear any ornament of gold or silver in her hair or round her neck, nor is there any gold or silver embroidery on her clothes. In fact, her only article of jewellery is a ring. Nor does she 'make up.' Her hair is only dressed once a week,—at times only once a fortnight. On Sundays she devotes only half an hour to her toilet,—on weekdays only a quarter of an hour. Often, when conversing with her, I have noticed that her chemise was splashed with ink; and I have sometimes remarked that her linen was torn. When she is reminded that she

really ought not to be so careless, she replies that she leaves that sort of thing to people who have time for it."

Then follows a paragraph concerning her way of life—

"She only allows herself three or four hours' sleep, going to bed very late, and getting up very early. For eighteen months at a stretch she has done with as little as three hours' sleep a day. As soon as she is up she devotes five hours to reading. It is a penance for her to have to dine in company; and when she dines alone she is barely half an hour at table. She drinks nothing but water, and is never heard to criticise her food or to remark that it is well or badly cooked. . . .

". . . Her mornings are devoted to public affairs, and she regularly attends the meetings of her Council. One morning, in spite of the fact that she had been bled, she spent five hours at a Cabinet Council; and when she was suffering from a fever which lasted for a month, she nevertheless continued, all the time, to attend to public business. God, she says, has intrusted to her the government of her kingdom; and she will discharge the task to the best of her ability, in order that, even if she is not always quite successful, at least she may have nothing to reproach herself with."

All public affairs, Father Mannerschied

continues, pass through her hands. She settles everything in person, and needs no prompting when she harangues Ambassadors; while "great generals, at whose names Germany trembles, stand mute and intimidated in the presence of their Queen." She also reads all the Treaties and State Papers, and explains them in Latin to those who do not understand them; and she is cosmopolitan in her sympathies, "loving all nations, and esteeming virtue wherever it may be found," and distinguishing only between good people and bad people without reference to their nationality. For the rest—

"She cannot endure the idea of marriage. Nothing can induce her to give herself to a husband because, as she says, she was born free and intends to remain so. In ordinary conversation she is of such an easy familiarity that no one would take her for a great lady, not to say a queen. She is the first to accost those with whom she wishes to converse, running up to them, taking them by the hand, and laughing and chaffing with them. And yet she inspires so much respect that many men feel as shy with her as if they were children. . . . She has maids-of-honour at her Court because the exigencies of pomp require her to do so; but she takes little notice of them, and only converses with men."

"She can converse with them," the chronicler

concludes, "in no less than eleven languages; she has invited learned men to her Court from all parts of Europe, and treated them with great liberality; and nothing is wanting to her perfection except that she should forswear the Lutheran and adopt the Roman Catholic religion."

That change of spiritual allegiance was imminent when the Jesuit wrote, as the Jesuit had reason to know; and the causes of the spiritual crisis (if crisis be the right word for it) shall be examined in their proper place. Before coming to that, however, we must pause and consider what the two character sketches which we have analysed amount to, and see if we cannot characterise in a more modern manner the woman whom they portray.

We shall, perhaps, best realise Christina if we picture a typical prodigy of the Bedford College for Women, and Girton, withdrawn from her natural environment to take her seat on a throne, proud to the point of vanity of her elevation, zealous to show herself equal to it,—zealous, above all things, to show that a woman could be a match for men on their own ground,—yet clinging to the intellectual interests which were more to her than pomp and power, and resolved, so far as might be, to reconstitute the old Girton life in the midst of the frivolities of the Court; accepting the new duties without abandoning the old occupations; continuing to

play the old games and to burn the midnight oil as before; preferring the society of professors to that of the Smart Set; working double tides in order to find time for everything which she keenly desired to do.

She desired, no doubt, among other things to flirt; and one hardly knows whether to regard her successive infatuations as reliefs to the nervous strain or as additions to it. But she was, in any case, living at high pressure,—living on her nerves,—living in the way which, unless the physical constitution be marvellously strong, inevitably leads to nervous breakdown. We shall see, in a moment, how the nervous breakdown occurred and the physician intervened; but we must first fill in the details of the pictures drawn by the Ambassador and the Jesuit, and show how the gathering multitude of the professors transformed Christina's Court into something resembling an Oxford Common Room.

CHAPTER VII

Christina's interest in literature and the arts—Her desire to have a salon and to entertain philosophers—Invitation to Descartes—Jealousy of Elizabeth, Princess Palatine—Unpleasant experiences of Descartes—His death in Sweden

CHRISTINA'S interest in art, literature, and ideas was not awakened or encouraged by any corresponding interest on the part of her subjects. The records of her reign may give the impression of a Renaissance; but the culture of her Court was exotic. Sweden, when she came to the throne, had neither art nor literature,—nor any desire for either. At the most it had only a certain amount of learning,—the monopoly of theologians. But Swedish tastes, and Swedish habits, were coarse; Sweden, in its general attitude towards culture, was a Martha, not a Mary.

Gustavus Adolphus had, indeed, to a certain extent, prepared the way for better things. He had founded a Swedish University, and looted German libraries in order to fill its bookshelves. Some of his officers, following his example, had founded schools and colleges. A rudimentary grammar school knowledge could be acquired in the country,—but little more. Languages, living and dead, could be learnt

there, but not science or philosophy,—unless one is to count theology as such. So Christina began, as we have seen her beginning, with the study of languages; and it was only because she was an exceptional woman, and not at all like the generality of the Swedes, that she went farther. Her case, in short, was like that of a precocious child in a crass Philistine household: eager to learn, but not thought much the more of for that by any one except her teachers, —suspected even by some of them of being "too clever by half."

Just as such a child, however, infallibly seeks and finds a sympathetic friend outside the crass Philistine circle, so Christina found a sympathetic friend in the French Ambassador, whose account of her we have just read: a cultivated amateur who might just as easily have been a man of letters as a diplomatist. Modern English diplomatists of whom he reminds us are the first Earl of Lytton, Sir Rennell Rodd, and Mr. Bryce. A modern French analogue is M. Jusserand. From the Ambassador Christina got her first glimpse of the great world of culture beyond the Swedish border; for he knew in the flesh the men whom she was beginning to know from their books. He told Christina how they talked; and she learnt from him what a French salon could be like.

And the talk of a French salon differed from that of the Swedish Court as the talk of an Oxford Common Room differs from that of the

commercial room in a Birmingham hotel. Christina realised the difference,—most likely her imagination exaggerated it,—and was moved by the ambition to shine in the sort of society which the Ambassador depicted. What was the use, she asked herself, of being a queen if she could not do so? She could, and would; and her friend, the Ambassador, must help her.

He was her confidant in other matters too. She seems to have told him, before she told any one else, that she was tired of the nuisance of royal pomp and of the prosy Lutheran religion, with its pretentious prayers and—above all—its interminable sermons. But those were later confidences. The first confidence was to the effect that she wanted to meet the clever people who wrote the clever books; that, as she could not visit them, she wanted them to visit her; that, as Swedish scholars were uninteresting, she would like to be put in communication with foreign scholars. She relied upon M. Chanut for that: he knew the right people,—would he make out a list?

That is how the interchange of courtesies between the Queen and the scholars began. The Queen wrote flattering letters; the scholars rejoined with eulogistic Latin epigrams; the Queen rewarded them for their epigrams with generous gifts and invitations to stay with her. Not all of them accepted the invitations; some of them made excuses. The journey was too

long; the Swedish climate was too severe; they had married wives, etc. But several came. We are told that, at one time, Christina had as many as twenty foreign scholars hanging about her Court, to the intense annoyance of native noblemen, to whom scholarship was doubly odious because it was an imported grace, and foreigners were doubly detestable because Christina gave them public appointments as librarians and curators of museums.

The most distinguished of the visitors—and the most warmly recommended—was Descartes. He was a particular friend of Chanut's, and not at all the kind of philosopher whom women call "musty" or "snuffy." He knew his manners, having been a military officer in his time, and was not only a deep thinker, but also a ladies' man. Before he became the favourite philosopher of the Queen of Sweden he had been the favourite philosopher of Elizabeth, Princess Palatine,—that interesting blue-stocking granddaughter of our own James I., who ultimately became an abbess and a mystic. Though he certainly was not the lover of either of them—being a middle-aged gentleman of irreproachable behaviour—he was the innocent cause of an unmistakable display of feminine jealousy.

When Christina first wrote to him he had already been, for some time, Elizabeth's philosophic adviser. Elizabeth was in exile,—an unfavourable turn of the wheel of fortune during that Thirty Years War which pursues

us everywhere having driven her parents from their kingdom of Bohemia. She was living at The Hague, a prey to melancholia, and Descartes had been soothing her, for six years or so, with the comfortable consolations of philosophy: setting her difficult problems in the higher mathematics, and discussing with her such matters as the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the proper place of the emotions in a sane philosophy of life. It was very beautiful and perfectly innocent friendship; but the lady and the philosopher do not seem to have taken quite the same view of it. His heart was capacious,—he was willing to shine anywhere with the magnificent impartiality of the sun; she wished him to be satisfied with shining in Holland and on her. So, when Christina wrote to him, a little rift within the lute was opened.

Just as Descartes had put problems to Elizabeth, so Christina put a problem to Descartes. She wanted to know—her age being then twenty—whether the abuse of hatred or the abuse of love opened the door to the more perilous possibilities. She not only wanted to know, but also wanted the philosopher to come all the way to Sweden in order to tell her. It seemed to Descartes a perfectly natural, but to Elizabeth a most unreasonable, request. She did not actually ask him to stay, but she hinted her desire with maidenly indirectness; while he, on his part, was deaf to her hints, and showed

that, though he was a ladies' philosopher, his incomparable powers of abstract reasoning had not enabled him to read a woman's heart.

His idea was that, as he was equally admired by two brilliant ladies, he ought to bring the two brilliant ladies together. He therefore showed Christina a number of letters which he had written to Elizabeth, singing Christina's praises in Elizabeth's ear—

"What I hear of her" (he wrote) "inspires me with such esteem for her that I feel that you and she would be worthy to converse together; and, as there are so few other people in the world who are worthy of either of you, I think it might not be difficult for Your Highness to form a close friendship with her,—a consummation which would not only be agreeable to Your Highness, but seems desirable on various grounds."

So badly do abstract thinkers blunder when trying to think out concrete problems complicated by factors undreamt of in their philosophies. For, of course,—human nature being human nature,—Christina wanted Elizabeth in Stockholm as little as Elizabeth wanted to go there. Each of them wanted Descartes to herself; and Descartes had to choose between them. He was so obtuse, and so susceptible to flattery,—and they, on their parts, were so delicate and indirect in their dealings with him,—that he never guessed either that Elizabeth was

sulking or that Christina was triumphing. But so it was.

His first letter to Christina shows how completely his eyes were dazzled by the distinction bestowed on him—

"MADAM,—If a letter had come to me from Heaven, and I had seen it fall from the clouds with my own eyes, I could not have been more surprised, or have received it with more respect and veneration than the communication which Your Majesty has deigned to send me inspires. I feel myself so little worthy of the expression of thanks contained in it that I can only accept it as a favour and an act of grace for which I shall always owe Your Majesty a debt which I shall never be able to pay."

Et cetera; the writer of the letter being a middle-aged philosopher, the most distinguished of his time, and the recipient a girl of twenty. And, at the same time, Descartes was writing to Elizabeth, telling her that he was about to write to Chanut, who would doubtless show his letters to Christina, and announcing his intention of "putting in them something which will suggest to her the desirability of seeking the friendship of Your Highness,—unless, of course, Your Highness formally forbids me to do so." And so, after certain delays, to Sweden, whence he promptly wrote to Elizabeth that "neither change of air nor change of climate" could

diminish his devotion to her, and assured her that he had lost no time in labouring at his great project of uniting in the bonds of cordial friendship the two princesses who were already united in the bond of a common affection for himself.

He saw Christina twice, and then he wrote—

"She has all the virtue and more than the merit which common report attributes to her. The generosity and dignity displayed in her smallest actions are combined with a gentleness and a goodness of heart which compel all the friends of virtue who have the honour of approaching her to devote themselves exclusively to her service."

And then followed what was intended to be the master-stroke—

"One of the first questions which she asked me was whether I could give her news of you, and I allowed no affectation to hinder me from setting forth my high opinion of Your Highness. I had remarked her magnanimity, and was sure that she would not be jealous, just as I am sure that Your Highness will feel no jealousy in reading my account of this great Queen's sentiments."

It was very well meant, but it was very foolish,—"so like a man," as women readers will

Elisabeth, Princess Palatine
from a painting by Gerard Honthorst

probably add: violating the unwritten law that a man must always moderate his enthusiasm when praising one woman to another. Nothing is less surprising than that Elizabeth continued to sulk. Her temper can hardly have been improved by the next letter, in which Descartes spoke of Christina's studies,—the very same studies into which he had once initiated Elizabeth,—announced that he was on such terms with Her Majesty that he could venture to "speak his mind to her quite freely," and related her most tactful consideration for his uncourtierlike tastes. He was exempted, he said, from ceremonial attendances at *levées*, and was only received in informal, but frequent, audiences,—*tête-à-tête*. "That," he concluded,—not considering what pain his words might give,—"is just what suits me"; and then comes a reference to the probable duration of his sojourn—

"After all, in spite of my great veneration for Her Majesty, I do not think I am likely to be detained in the country after next summer. Still, I can make no promises about the future, but can only assure Your Highness that I hope to remain always," etc. etc. etc.

Christina had triumphed; and there is no reason whatever for supposing that she was indifferent to the triumph. The triumph may very well have been the more irritating to

Elizabeth because Descartes, remembering the days when he had been a military dandy, attired himself for the journey as if for conquest in other fields than those of intellectual strife. A friend, who saw him off, was much impressed by the magnificence of his appearance and apparel: his carefully curled wig, his pointed shoes, and his richly embroidered gloves; his easy air of a polished man of the world,—"a courtier dressed for the part." One needs the description in order to understand the exclamation of the pilot of the vessel in which he landed in Sweden when Christina questioned him about his passenger: "Madam, it is not a mere man that I have brought you,—it is a demi-god."

Descartes had never, it would seem, embellished himself to that extent for Elizabeth,—who was several years Christina's senior; and we may take it that the sudden transformation did not pass unobserved by her. We may take it, too, that her observation of it was one of the reasons why she sulked, and is, partially at least, accountable for the veiled malice of her reply to the letter quoted.

She is not jealous, she protests,—not in the least. How can she help but admire "a person so accomplished"—one who "acquits our sex of the charges of weakness and imbecility preferred against it by the pedants"? No doubt she will soon prefer the Cartesian philosophy to those linguistic studies to which

she appears, so far, to have confined herself. It is really wonderful that she should be able to find time for philosophy as well as for politics,—pursuits so different and so exacting that either of them might reasonably be expected to monopolise a student's attention. As for the polite references to herself—

"I attribute them solely to her desire to oblige you by giving you the opportunity of exercising that virtue of charity which you have displayed on various other occasions; and I have to thank you for my place in her good opinion; which place I shall preserve the more easily because I shall never have the honour of being known to Her Majesty otherwise than through the account which you give of me. Still, I am capable of one act of disloyalty against her, and am glad that your extreme veneration for her is not going to compel you to spend all the rest of your life in Sweden."

It is more than feminine,—it is feline. Elizabeth writes as if she had had to resign to a rival, not a professor of philosophy, but a lover. Perhaps she had at least lost a man whom she loved, though she had been too modest to tell her love, and he had been too exclusively intellectual in his interests to suspect it; but, if there had been any tragedy of that sort, as the dark hints thrown out behind the veil of reticence would seem to indicate, the curtain was about

to fall on it. Descartes's sojourn in Sweden was to be brief; and a very few words will suffice to tell all that there is to be told about it.

His first experiences of Christina's Court were a little disconcerting. His gorgeous appearance—brilliant as that of a bird of Paradise—caused his tastes and talents to be misapprehended. Summoned to Stockholm to discourse of the mysteries of metaphysics, he had no sooner arrived than he was invited to dance in a ballet, organised to celebrate the Peace of Münster. He excused himself, but consented, under pressure, to write lyrics for the *divertissement*. If we could picture Herbert Spencer, at some modern Court, thus shuffling in the shoes of Mr. Adrian Ross,—and shuffling in them, as might be expected, very clumsily,—we should be helped to realise the situation. There were those about the Court who considered that the commission to write those lyrics should have been theirs; and they did not fail to make disagreeable remarks.

Christina, however, had time for philosophy as well as for levity; and it was a further trial to Descartes that she selected a very inconvenient hour for her lessons in that important subject. She was, as we know, an early riser; and it was at five o'clock in the morning that he had to attend in the library and instruct her. That was not only an affront to metaphysics, but also a nuisance to the metaphysician, who, since leaving the army, had always lived a life of

ease, and loved his bed. The season was the late autumn, when the mornings, in northern climates, are very dark and very cold. Descartes shivered over his duties for a couple of months, and then caught inflammation of the lungs and died of it.

It was Chanut who had the painful task of communicating the news to Elizabeth ; and her reply was to the effect that she wanted her letters returned to her. The Ambassador protested, but the Princess insisted. They were in no sense compromising letters,—Chanut wanted to present them to Christina, who, "moved by the spectacle of virtue unaffected by jealousy, would be very glad to be confirmed in the singularly high opinion which she has formed of the character of Your Royal Highness" ; but that was the last argument by which Elizabeth was likely to be moved. She had protested that she was not jealous ; but she was. Her philosopher had been taken from her ; but the letters should not be taken over with him. It is hardly possible, following the argument, to doubt that she had loved him.

In any case, he was her only philosopher,—the one ewe lamb. Christina had half the philosophers of Europe at her service,—let her make her choice among them. Our next chapter will show those other philosophers arriving at her Court in flocks.

CHAPTER VIII

Christina's Court of Scholars—Saumaise—The practical joke which Christina played on him—His gorgeous Court dress—Vossius, afterwards Canon of Windsor—Daniel Heinsius and his bibulous propensities—Nicolas Heinsius—Stiernhielm—Naudæus—Bochart—Christina's nervous breakdown—Frivolity prescribed as a cure for it—She plays battledore and shuttlecock with a Doctor of Divinity

LET us adapt a headline from popular newspapers and announce a chapter: Mainly About Scholars.

From 1648 onwards it must have seemed to scholars that all roads led to Stockholm. Each scholar who arrived there seems, as soon as he felt sure of his position at Court, to have asked leave to introduce a friend; and Christina, so far as scholars were concerned, took the line that her friends' friends were her friends,—the more the merrier. There was a continual coming and going of scholars; but, on the whole, they came more than they went, and their numbers steadily increased. It is the easier to distinguish their several characteristics because the Swedes did not like them either individually or collectively, and did not pretend to do so.

The great Saumaise, who latinised his name as Salmasius, heads the list. He was the

Salmasius (or Saumaise) with whom Milton engaged in Latin controversy concerning the propriety of the execution of Charles I.; and Dr. Johnson tells us that Milton boasted of having worried him into his grave by detecting "howlers" in his Latin prose. His rank among scholars was, nevertheless, as exalted as that of Sir Richard Jebb in our own day; but he lacked Sir Richard Jebb's dignity, amiability, and charm. He once boasted openly, in a company of scholars, that he considered himself a match for all the other scholars of the world put together. "He seemed," wrote one of his enemies, "to have made himself a throne on a heap of pebbles in order that he might always have missiles ready to hand to hurl at the passers-by."

Moreover, Saumaise was not used to Courts, and had a wife who was equally unaccustomed to them, but nevertheless entertained high social ambitions. His patience in putting up with her, Christina said, was even more exemplary than his learning; while her comment on his social awkwardness was to the effect that, though he knew the name for a chair in dozens of languages, he did not know how to sit down on one. Mme Saumaise, however, insisting that her husband was at once "the most learned of nobles and the most noble of learned men," insisted also that his dress should be in keeping with that character. Other professors, less noble, might be satisfied with black or

"subfusc" garments, but he must wear the costume which she had designed for him. It consisted of "a buff leather waistcoat, scarlet breeches, and an ash-coloured hat adorned with a white feather." But even so, people did not call him, as they had called Descartes, "a demi-god": they only laughed.

Whether Christina laughed is not recorded; but she did, at any rate, make Saumaise the victim of one practical joke which sheds a pleasant light upon her taste in jokes. It was when he was ill, and she went to visit him in his room—

"She found him" (the French wit Ménage tells us) "in bed. He was reading a book which, out of respect for her, he closed as soon as he saw her enter. She asked him what book it was; and he admitted that he was enlivening the tedium of his illness by reading a collection of stories which were, he was bound to say, just a little . . . 'Aha!' said the Queen, 'I must have a look at it. Show me the good things.' M. Saumaise showed her one of the best; and she read it through to herself, smiling as she did so. Then, in order to have a little fun, she turned to the beautiful Mlle Sparre, her favourite maid-of-honour, who knew French. 'Come, Sparre,' she said. 'Look at this beautiful work of devotion entitled "How to get on with the Ladies." I want you to read this page aloud to me.' The fair maiden had

not read three lines before she stopped and blushed, startled at the improprieties; but as the Queen, who was holding her sides with laughter, peremptorily ordered her to go on, her modesty did not save her. The poor girl had to read every word of it."

And there we may leave Saumaise, merely adding that when he left Stockholm, after a year's stay, to resume the duties of his professorship at Leyden, Christina dismissed him with a pension as well as her blessing, and that when he died, and his widow scrupulously obeyed his testamentary injunction to throw all his manuscripts in the fire, Christina wrote to reproach her for having "killed a second time one who ought to be immortal." But the story of Christina's delight in such jests as that of which Ebba Sparre was the victim can be parallelled. A visitor was once invited to hear a number of Swedish girls sing glees which the Queen had taught them. They had been taught to sing in French,—a language of which they were all quite ignorant; and the visitor found, to his amazement, that the alleged glees which their innocent lips had been taught to utter were, in reality, amorous ditties of such a broad indecorum that even the most brazen-faced of men could hardly have rendered them without blushing.

We pass to Vossius, the scholar from whom

the Queen learnt Greek. He was a divine, with an eye to the main chance and little scruple as to the means of seizing it. Christina bought his library, made him her librarian, and gave him a roving commission to collect books for her. He kept no proper accounts, and not only stole a good deal of the money, but also appropriated a good many of the books to his own use. English readers may take a special interest in him because Charles II. subsequently made him Canon of Windsor : a post for which the merry monarch thought him specially qualified on the ground that he was a credulous person who " believed everything except the Bible." The story of his unedifying end is told by another of Christina's scholarly *protégés*, Peter Daniel Huet—

" When he lay on his death-bed, in 1688, being urged by the Dean of Windsor to receive the Sacrament, either disregard of that solemnity, or the expectation of still surviving, induced him to decline the proposal with the observation that what he then wanted from the Dean was to be put in the way how to make the farmers pay his dues ; and in that unedifying manner he left the world."

It was Saumaise who introduced Vossius at Court ; but he afterwards quarrelled with Saumaise because the latter's son borrowed money from him and neglected to repay it.

Christina had to intervene and make the peace between them.

Nicolas Heinsius was another of Christina's book-buyers; and one has to be careful not to do him an injustice by confusing him with his father, Daniel. Daniel had received marks of distinction from Gustavus Adolphus; but his chief claim to distinction was his addiction to the bottle. He was a Professor at Leyden, where the frequency of his excuses for not lecturing aroused the sarcasm of the students; with the result that one day, when he entered the lecture-room, he found the following notice posted on the door—

"Professor Heinsius regrets to announce that the consequences of last night's debauch prevent him from lecturing this morning."

It is also related of him that one day, when rolling unsteadily home from a late supper-party, he composed the following remarkable elegiac couplet—

Sta pes, sta bone pes, sta pes, ne labere, mi pes;
Sta pes, aut lapides hi mihi lectus erunt.

Which distich has been rendered into English hexameters thus—

Stand leg, pray stand, I beg, stand leg, and don't slide about so;
Good leg, pr'ythee trip not, stand fast, or these stones must my bed be.

But Nicolas Heinsius inherited Daniel's talents without his weaknesses, and collected books quite honestly for Christina in Italy. The scale on which she conducted her purchases is attested by one of his letters to her—

"The Italians" (he reported) "began to complain that ships were laden with the spoils of their libraries, and that all their best aids to learning were carried away from them to the remotest North."

The story of Professor Heinsius may suggest the story of Professor Boecler: brought from Strasburg to be Professor at the University of Upsala. He, too, had trouble with the students, though for a different reason. Their stupidity annoyed him, and he once concluded a lecture on Tacitus with the offensive remark: "I would say more if the wooden heads of the Swedes could comprehend it." The students waited until the lecture was over, and then they acted. They laid their foreign Professor across a desk and smacked him, having first undressed him for the purpose; and then they proceeded to further outrages,—smashing his bedroom windows by night, when he was in bed with Frau Boecler. Christina ordered the punishment of the offenders, and sought to soothe the injured vanity of their victim by giving him four thousand crowns, a gold chain, and the office of historiographer; but he nevertheless resigned, and departed with all speed.

That pleasant anecdote shows that the Swedes did not love learning when it came to them from abroad; but the case of Stiernhielm shows that they were hardly more tolerant of it when it was a native product. It was he who introduced burning-glasses and microscopes into Sweden. With the former he singed the beard of a rustic; with the latter he magnified a flea, to the amazement of a clergyman. The result was that both the clergyman and the countryman deposed in Court that he was a sorcerer and an atheist; and Christina had to interfere to save him from the stake. She had to interpose a second time to protect him from the consequences of an expression of opinion that the Swedish language was of greater antiquity than Hebrew; and this time she carried the courage of her convictions to the point of ennobling him.

Naudæus, who was yet another of Christina's numerous librarians; Meibom, the great authority on the music of the ancients; Comenius, who undertook to reorganise Swedish education; Hermann Conring, Loccenius, Schoeffler—these are a few more miscellaneous names which it must suffice, for the moment, merely to mention. The stories which one or two of the names suggest belong to a later chapter. Before we come to them we will pause to speak of the great Bochart and his young friend, Peter Daniel Huet.

Bochart was the Protestant minister at Caen, and the author of an admirable work on Sacred Geography. Christina sent for him on the recommendation of Vossius, and, Huet writes, "though fettered by the public ministry of his religion and the attractions of a very affectionate family, and habituated to the pleasures of study and tranquil leisure, he postponed every other consideration to the will of the Queen, and was not deterred either by the length of the journey, the loss of time, or the inconvenience to his affairs." The eloquent passage shows us Christina's Court gathering in the scholars as the magnet gathers up the iron filings. They left all to join her, though it took them weeks to do so: weeks in which they were tossed on stormy seas in ships which we should call cockle-shells, or jolted over roads which were worse than Cornish lanes in winter. So strong—and so well-founded—was the belief that she would make it worth their while, at the cost of the Swedish taxpayer, to do so.

That Huet was invited by any one except Bochart does not appear. Bochart seems to have assumed that he might bring his friend, pretty much as a visitor to a great house assumes that he may bring his chauffeur; and the assumption was not unwarranted. Christina was delighted to see him,—she kept open house for scholars. She shook hands with Huet warmly, advised him not to marry, and turned him loose among her manuscripts. But surprises never-

theless awaited both the guests. They had heard much from Vossius concerning her way of life—

"He explained to her the ancient authors in both languages; nor did she suffer a day to pass without devoting some of her best hours to reading with him, in which she engaged so eagerly as to neglect the usual time for repose."

Bochart expected that he too would find an ardent scholar; instead of which, to his astonishment, he found a playfellow,—or one, at all events, who proposed herself as such. He must play the flute to her,—he who could no more play the flute than he could fly. Or he must accept her challenge to a game of battledore and shuttlecock,—he the most illustrious of living Oriental scholars, attired in the flowing robes of a Doctor of Divinity. It might be hard to say which of the two requests he found the more embarrassing.

It was amazing as well as embarrassing; but there was an explanation. Between Bochart's invitation and his arrival in Stockholm things had happened. Christina had broken down through overwork, just like a Girton girl who is too anxious to shine in examinations. She had had fevers and fainting fits —various symptoms of heart failure and nervous collapse. The Swedish doctors had been unable to make anything of her case; so a French

doctor had taken charge of it. Instead of medicine, he had prescribed a livelier life,—less study and a modicum of fun with or without vulgarity. In challenging a Doctor of Divinity to a game of battledore and shuttlecock Christina was only carrying out his prescription. It was for the same reason that she called for a tune on the flute from him,—as reasonable a request as if Queen Victoria had called for a tune on the flute from the Dean of Christ Church or the Master of Balliol,—and chaffed Huet about his desire for a wife, reminding him than an Argive namesake of his, of whom Pausanias wrote, had had a wife who had made him ridiculous.

We must now introduce the physician who had brought about this transformation: the ingenious Dr. Bourdelot.

CHAPTER IX

Christina's French physician, Dr. Bourdelot—Practical jokes played on the scholars at his suggestion—His unpopularity and ultimate discomfiture—Christina's quarrel with Magnus de la Gardie

BOURDELOT was the son of a barber of Sens, in France; but some say that the barber was a surgeon. The two callings were not so easily distinguishable then as now; and it may well be that he both shaved the whole and cupped the sick. Whether surgeon or barber, however, at any rate he married well; and his brother-in-law—famous alike as a hellenist and a physician—adopted his son. The son is said to have been brought up as an apothecary, and to have had no right to the title of physician; but that is another distinction which was finer in those days than in ours. The persons who called him "quack" and "charlatan" had reasons other than professional for doing so, as we shall see. He was employed, at any rate, at one time, as physician to the Prince de Condé; and he practised in Italy, and came back with a story that he had doctored the Pope and might have been a Cardinal if he had liked. If one doubts the truth of that story, one does so, not because one has confidence in the principles which, at that date,

governed the distribution of papal patronage, but because Bourdelot does not strike one as the sort of man who would have declined the honour if the chance of it had really come his way.

He came to Sweden as the nominee of Saumaise, who wanted a friend at Court to keep his memory green there, after his departure, and jog Christina's elbow if there should appear to be any question of suppressing the pension which she had granted him. Christina's illness—or one of her illnesses—occurred soon after his arrival. Some irresponsible person told a story of having seen a phantom funeral in the Park; and this was held to be an evil omen, like the wail of the banshee in Ireland. The Court physicians insisted that nothing serious was the matter,—that Christina only needed to take a few bottles of their stuff. She took their stuff, began to recover, and relapsed; and then Bourdelot appeared, with the air of a consultant who proposed to teach the general practitioners their business, and emphatically insisted upon a complete change of treatment.

There was a row,—such a row as raged between German and English physicians round the deathbed of the German Emperor Frederick. The Swedish doctors said that the French doctor was a "quack,"—that he knew no medicine and had ulterior motives. The French doctor replied that the Swedish doctors were the slaves of a pernicious professional routine,—that Christina had a great deal more the matter with her than

their bottles of stuff could cure,—that it was a case not for medicine but for a change of habit: that what was really wanted was rest and frivolity. He added that Christina evidently did not know how to be frivolous, and that the learned men about her did not seem to know how to teach her; but that he did, being himself a frivolous man. And he thrummed a light air on the guitar, and sang; that being, as we say, his "bedside manner."

It was good sense, whether Bourdelot was a good doctor or not. In an age in which physicians carried gold-headed canes, and shook their wooden heads funereally, this light and easy bedside manner was the very thing to please the patient. Christina admitted that all work and no play had made her a dull girl. She was delighted to have a doctor who would not only tell her to run away and play, but would offer to play with her. She was as much impressed when Bourdelot told her that the French laughed at blue-stockings as was Mme Bovary when an admirer assured her that it was considered the correct thing in Paris to make love in the interior of cabs. She agreed that a little fun would be a pleasant change for her; she had a sense of humour, as the circumstances of her visit to Saumaise's bedside have shown us; and she, therefore, installed her new doctor as Master of the Revels.

People said, of course, that he was her lover,—it was the sort of thing that people were sure to

say. The statement can be neither proved nor disproved, and may, therefore, be ignored. We are only entitled to speak of an infatuation which clashed, as we shall see, with an earlier infatuation; our picture is only of a gay and festive physician taking charge of his royal patient's life, and making her Court the scene of much innocent merriment. It was he, we cannot doubt, who proposed that she should play battledore and shuttlecock with the Doctor of Divinity instead of taking lessons from him; and that was only one of many frivolities which surprised and shocked the men of learning.

The amiable Bochart was, on yet another occasion, the victim. Arrangements had been made for that excellent man to give a reading from his admirable but tedious treatise on Sacred Geography to the assembled Court. At the last moment the physician entered, explaining that the Queen was too ill to attend, but that the reading must proceed in her absence. It proceeded before a company who regarded the reading as an unmitigated nuisance, and did not disguise their sentiments. Bochart declared that in ridiculing him they only made themselves ridiculous, and "brought down upon their heads the just indignation of all reputable people"; but, on the whole, the laugh was unquestionably with Bourdelot.

Other victims of his pleasantry were Naudæus and Meibom. The latter was the greatest living authority on the Music of the Ancients; the

former had specialised in their dances; and Bourdelot persuaded Christina to command them to give an entertainment. Meibom was to sing, and Naudæus was to dance to the accompaniment of his voice. But Meibom had no voice, and Naudæus's knowledge of dancing was purely theoretical. They tried to excuse themselves; but their excuses were not accepted. It was a command performance; the Queen had to be obeyed; and the Court was dissolved in inextinguishable laughter. Whereupon Meibom, flying into a furious passion, vowed that he would punch Bourdelot's head, and set to work to do so in the Queen's library; with the result that he was expelled from Sweden. Bochart wrote to Vossius about it, heaving a sigh, predicting that Christina would one day see the error of her ways, and meanwhile sadly quoting Virgil's *Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit.*

So that Bourdelot became unpopular with the scholars; and he also had to face the combined hostility of the doctors and the clergy. The former spread stories to the effect that all the patients, except the Queen, who had ever consulted him had died; the latter charged him with atheism. Seeing that they also charged him, at a later date, with having tried to convert Christina to Roman Catholicism, that accusation need not be taken seriously; but the ecclesiastics were, at any rate, quite serious in their attempt to use the charge as a means of getting rid of him. There were prolix

pulpit denunciations to the effect that God would be sure to "spew evil sovereigns out of his mouth"; but all in vain. All sermons, whether they praised or censured her, were equally a nuisance to Christina. She lolled on her cushions and caressed her dogs instead of listening; or she scraped her chair on the floor; or she laughed and jested with her companions.

It was decided that her mother, who had by this time returned to Sweden, had better speak to her; but Marie-Eléonore was almost the silliest, whereas Christina was quite the cleverest, woman in the country. It was as if Mrs. Nickleby had been persuaded to talk seriously to George Eliot concerning her religious opinions; and the result was what might have been expected. Christina listened for a little while with a politely patient curiosity; and then, mingling contempt with her politeness, suggested that, as her mother seemed to have some difficulty in understanding points of theological detail, she had better leave them to the theologians. Whereupon Marie-Eléonore burst into tears; and Christina, after remarking that her trouble was of her own making, relented, and comforted her, and advised her to go and live in the country,—which she did.

There was trouble, again, between Bourdelot and Magnus de la Gardie; but there is not much of a story to be got out of that. Bourdelot had, in vulgar parlance, "put" Magnus de la Gardie's

"nose out of joint": no more; no less. Magnus de la Gardie was a vain fool, though a handsome one; and he was not the less vain of his Queen's favour, because he was now a married man. After all the significant hints which he had dropped in Paris, it was not agreeable to him to find the doctor preferred to him. A nobleman is a nobleman, however foolish; a doctor is only a doctor, however good his bedside manner. So Magnus accused Bourdelot of slandering him behind his back; and Bourdelot faced the music. He demanded to be confronted with the witnesses; and the witnesses broke down under examination, with the result that Christina forbade them to show their faces in her Court again.

Once more, therefore, Bourdelot had triumphed; but though he beat his enemies in detail, he had to yield in the end to their accumulated animosity. The particulars of his discomfiture are obscure; but it is at least clear that he retired in good order, loaded with presents. There was even talk of making him an Ambassador, though that did not come to pass: fortunately, perhaps, seeing that the functions of a diplomatist are different from those of a practical joker. The most likely theory is that he overdid his jocularity, and Christina tired of it when she recovered her health and mental balance; but the story that she tossed away a letter which he wrote her, saying that it "smelt of medicine," is a story which

itself smells of malice. She always considered that Bourdelot's well-timed levity had saved her life; and we find her still in amiable correspondence with him towards the end of her life: protesting that she is now well enough to "laugh at doctors," and that the best of all receipts for sound health is a trip to Rome.

In a sense, of course, Bourdelot's retirement was a triumph for Magnus de la Gardie; but Magnus got little satisfaction from his triumph. He came to Christina yet again, with the air of a man with a grievance, complaining that it had reached his ears that she had spoken evil of him behind his back,—had called him a traitor and said that, though she should not punish him herself, she would hear with pleasure of any affront that had been put upon him by others. He had heard it, he said, from Steinberg,—the Queen's Equerry, a gallant man who had lately saved Christina's life by fishing her out of the water, into which she had unfortunately fallen while inspecting a ship-of-war. He was instantly confronted with Steinberg as with Bourdelot; Steinberg, like Bourdelot, denied having used the words attributed to him; and Steinberg, like Bourdelot, was believed.

And then there were further complications,—Magnus dragged a certain Count Schlippenbach into the matter. It was Schlippenbach, he now stated, who had told him what Steinberg had said that Christina had said about him; but Schlippenbach, in his turn, denied having carried

any such gossip. Very well, said Christina,—Magnus, having had the lie given him by Schlippenbach, must challenge him. But Magnus would not. Schlippenbach, he said, was not of sufficiently high rank to be worthy of meeting a nobleman of his dignity on the field of honour. In that case, said Christina, Magnus had better go away, and stay away. He pleaded for an interview, and received an indignant reply,—a letter to which reference has already been made—

"Do not imagine" (Christina wrote) "that I am angry with you,—I assure you that I am not. The only sentiment which I can henceforth feel for you is that of pity; and that cannot help you, seeing that you have, by your own act, rendered my feelings of good will for you useless. You are unworthy, on your own showing. . . . Were I capable of changing my mind, I should regret ever having formed a friendship with a soul so feeble; but such weakness is unworthy of me, and, having always acted in accordance with the dictates of reason, I ought not to blame myself for throwing a veil over the course of events."

And then comes the phrase already quoted, which it is necessary to repeat—

"During these nine years I have done too much for you in always blindly taking your

part against every one. But now that you are false to your truest interests, there is no reason why I should give any further thought to them. . . . *You have yourself betrayed a secret which I had resolved to keep all my life, by showing that you were unworthy of the fortune I built for you.*"

It is an enigmatic sentence,—one can only guess at its inner meaning. It might mean that Magnus had been favoured, and been false,—and that Christina had forgiven the infidelity and covered it up with a sentimental friendship. Or the secret may have been that Magnus was, in reality, Christina's natural brother, — the natural son of Gustavus Adolphus and the beautiful Ebba Brahé. His subsequent bitterness towards her would be equally in keeping with either theory ; but there is no evidence of anything, and we must be content to leave the mystery mysterious : turning from it to inspect other aspects of Christina's Court, and to inspect Christina herself through the eyes of Cromwell's Ambassador, Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, who arrived in Sweden at about this time.

CHAPTER X

Bulstrode, the British Ambassador to Sweden—His character sketch of Christina—His dance with her—His conversations with her on various subjects—She informs him of her intention to abdicate—His unsuccessful attempt to dissuade her

THOUGH Bulstrode Whitelocke was the Ambassador of a Puritan Government, we must not think of him as one of the ordinary psalm-singers of the period. He figured on the Puritan side in the character of a "political Dissenter" rather than a fanatic. He had been a gentleman before he became a Puritan: he remained a gentleman first and a Puritan afterwards. He was an Oxford man—a fellow commoner of St. John's—and a barrister of the Middle Temple, with a practice worth £2000 a year and a country seat near Henley-on-Thames. As a law student he had organised a masque for the diversion of the King and Court; he had been complimented, on that occasion, not only on his stage-management, but on his dancing. England had need of such Puritans no less than of the Puritans who went about snuffling that if Christ had not died for them they had been damned.

He was one of those, moreover, who had too much wit to associate themselves with the

indictment, trial, and execution of the King: a reason, of course, for expecting him to be a *persona grata* to other sovereigns, who might have found it hard to be polite to regicides. On the other hand, he was too good a Parliamentarian to please Cromwell; and it therefore suited Cromwell to find him honourable employment at a distance from home. So, when there was trouble with the Dutch, and a Treaty with Sweden was deemed desirable, he was the obvious man to be charged with the mission. He did not in the least want to go; but he yielded to the claims of expediency, took two of his children with him, leaving ten behind, and tore himself from the arms of a wife who not only wept but "shrieked" at the hour of his departure, believing Sweden to be as remote as the North Pole, and sadly fearing that she would never see her husband's face again.

And truly the journey was a terrible experience, very different from any that a modern Ambassador has to take. On the high seas Whitelocke had to run the gauntlet of the Dutch fleet,—he actually captured one of their ships, and considered that he did no violence to international law by bringing it into a Swedish port as a prize. It was a time, too, when British Ambassadors were frequently waylaid and murdered, as Ascham and Dorislaus had lately been. Moreover, the sea voyage was long and rough, and most of the company were prostrated with sea-sickness; and even after they had landed

at Gothenburg, their troubles were by no means at an end. They still had to travel in coaches and carts—a long procession of one hundred carts—for many weary days over abominable roads, putting up for the night in miserable country inns before they reached Upsala, where the Queen was wintering. It was on November 6, 1653, that Whitelocke weighed anchor in the Thames, and on November 15 that he landed. He rested at Gothenburg for a fortnight, and did not get to Upsala until just before Christmas Eve.

His adventures by the way are his business rather than ours; but his record of the spirit in which he faced them shows us usefully what manner of man it was that Cromwell had sent to Christina. He was a Puritan up to a point, but a very cheery Puritan: one who combined a rough sense of humour with a keen sense of his personal and ambassadorial dignity. It was his pleasant habit to "droll" with his companions, or, as we should say, to "chaff" them. He began by drolling with the ship's company, "by affording them now and then a douse in the neck or a kick in jest . . . which demeanours please those kind of people." He ended by drolling with the Queen of Sweden, albeit in a manner more suitable to her condition.

Though no total abstainer, again, he astonished the Swedes by refusing to join them in the drinking of toasts. "Why not 'eat' a toast instead?" he asked them; and there were indeed

horrible examples in Sweden which indicated that that was the safer way of pledging those whom one esteemed. The case of the Russian Ambassador may be cited; a formal reception of the diplomatic corps having to be put off on account of that Muscovite's excesses—

"The Russ" (Whitelocke tells us) "had sent word that, the notice of his audience not being given him till about ten o'clock this morning, he had before that time drunk so much *aqua-vitæ* that he was already drunk, and not in a condition to have his audience that day, but desired it might be appointed another day, and he to have earlier notice of it."

Another matter in which Whitelocke had firm principles and stuck to them firmly was that of Lord's Day observance. As each Sabbath came round he required his chaplain to preach two sermons to his retinue; and when the chaplain had finished he generally added admonitions of his own, speaking more to the point than the clergy did, and having, as one imagines, something of a lawyer's disdain for clerical circumlocutions. Nor would he divert himself, or countenance diversion, on the Sunday: a day which, he insisted, in many discourses, must be wholly given over to devotional exercise and Bible reading. He begged that he might be given no Sunday invitations even to Court entertainments, in order that he might not have

to cause offence by declining them ; but on other days he could be induced to dance, with the slow dignity becoming his years and station, and was, in fact, rather glad to have the opportunity of demonstrating that, Puritan though he was, he danced uncommonly well.

Such were his manners and disposition ; and if we desire a picture of his appearance on ceremonial occasions, this is how he tells us that he looked—

" His secretary, for the credit of his master, had put himself into a rich habit. Whitelocke himself was plain, but extraordinarily rich in his habit, though without any gold or silver lace or embroidery. His suit was of black English cloth, the cloak lined with the same cloth, and that and the suit set with very fair rich diamond buttons ; his hat-band of diamonds answerable ; and all of the value of £1000."

Thus plainly but bravely apparelled, he proceeded to his first audience ; the Queen receiving him " sitting, at the upper end of the room, upon her chair of state of crimson velvet, with a canopy of the same over it." Her magnificence, he observed, was less than his. Her dress was " of plain grey stuff," surmounted with " a jacket such as men wear of the same stuff." Round her neck was a black scarf, " tied before with a black ribbon, as soldiers and mariners sometimes use to wear " ; while " her hair was braided and

hung loose upon her head." She nevertheless had "much of majesty in her demeanour"; but Bulstrode Whitelocke was not the man to let himself be too much impressed by it. The Spanish Ambassador was reported to have been so dazzled by her that, when first received, he had made three low bows and retired without speaking,—affecting to be overawed, dumb-foundered, unable to find words; but if Christina expected Whitelocke to do the same, she had misjudged him—

"The Queen" (he writes) "was very attentive whilst he spake, and, coming up close to him, by her looks and gestures (as was supposed) would have daunted him; but those who have been conversant in the late great affairs in England are not so soon as others appalled with the presence of a young lady and her servants."

So, the ordinary civilities having been exchanged, Whitelocke withdrew and settled down in his Embassy. He showed himself a man of the world as well as a Puritan by hastening to make friends with "Grave Tott, the Queen's favourite, a gallant young gentleman"; and one would gather from the way he puts it that it was a matter of course to him that queens should have favourites,—a foreign custom to be accepted by him in the same tolerant spirit in which he accepted foreign food and foreign languages. He also let his interests range some-

what in the style of an American Ambassador in England by entering into friendly relations with the students of the Upsala University. They presented an address of welcome to him, composed in verse and in English. He thought the verses quaint; and so they were—

"One only star (from East) three Kings did lead:
Most glorious Mars and Jupiter brought you to Swede,
Who, doubtless, with your famous will and wisdom,
Will knot and LOCK ours with your most martial kingdom."

Et cetera; leading to the conclusion that—

"Thus do we, the literal flower of this most glorious Academy,
With hearts embrace whom Heaven sent, and praise your famous Excellency."

And so to business; though, as Whitelocke's business is not ours, we will not dwell upon it, but merely record that he was kept kicking his heels in Sweden rather longer than he liked before he could get it finished. The round of banquets, musical evenings, and diplomatic interviews would be wearisome to follow in detail; but one must insist that Whitelocke was a strong man who maintained the dignity of the Commonwealth by emphatically affirming his title to ceremonial precedence. When the Master of the Ceremonies told him that, at a certain reception, the Danish Ambassador would take precedence of him because he was the representative of a crowned sovereign, he replied that if the Danish Ambassador attempted to do anything of the

kind, he would lay violent hands on him, even in the royal presence, and throw him out ; with the result that, as Whitelocke was believed to be a man of his word, the Danish Ambassador received no invitation to that party.

His firmness, however, did not prevent Christina from liking him. Again and again she invited him to join her when she proposed to " take the air " ; and the conversation was by no means limited to diplomatic business. He " drolled " with her, as has been said ; he had even some reason to believe that she confided in him. She told him that she considered Cromwell " one of the gallantest men in the world,"—superior even to the Prince de Condé. She was much interested in his description of the officers and soldiers of the Army of the Parliament " encouraging and exhorting one another out of the word of God "—an example which Gustavus Adolphus had set ; and she mentioned the proposal of marriage which she had received from Charles II.—

" I confess that letters have passed between us ; but this I assure you, that I will not marry that King ; he is a young man, and in a condition sad enough ; though I respect him very much, yet I shall never marry him, you may be well assured."

She was also curious about Whitelocke's own matrimonial affairs—

"How many wives have you had?"

"I have had three wives."

"Have you had children by all of them?"

"Yes, by every one of them."

"Pardieu! Vous êtes incorrigible!"

"Madam, I have been a true servant to your sex; and as it was my duty to be kind to my wives, so I count it my happiness and riches and strength to have many children."

Then we have a curious dialogue arising out of some remarks on the comparative poverty of Sweden. The English, Christina said, had money to spare, whereas she had none; whereupon—

"I do not see Your Majesty to waste the revenues of your Crown in gallantry of clothes for your person."

"I am the least curious in clothes of any woman, especially now I am in the country."

"Your wearing plain clothes makes them rich."

A compliment which the Queen turned with the irrelevant remark: "My Chancellor will be in town shortly"; whereto Whitelocke adroitly responded: "Your Majesty is happy in such a servant of so great wisdom, experience, and fidelity."

Religion was another of Christina's favourite subjects. The number and variety of the sects

in England perplexed her; and she was also curious to know what Whitelocke thought about transubstantiation,—a significant hint as to the turn which her thoughts were beginning to take. That, however, is a matter which we shall have to return to. For the moment it is more relevant to show how Whitelocke acquitted himself at one of the Court balls. Christina invited him to dance with her; he begged to be excused, but she insisted: "I will try," she said, "whether you can dance." So he took up the challenge, and earned a compliment—

"The Hollanders" (Christina said) "reported to me, a great while since, that all the *noblesse* of England were of the King's party, and none but mechanics of the Parliament party, and not a gentleman among them; now I thought to try you, and to shame you if you could not dance; but I see that you are a gentleman and have been bred a gentleman, and that makes me say that the Hollanders are lying fellows."

Whereto Whitelocke properly replied that the Parliament "would not have given the honour to any but a gentleman to kiss Your Majesty's hand," adding: "I was bred up in the qualities of a gentleman, and, in my youth, was accounted not inferior to others in the practice of them." And Christina thanked him, saying: "I take it as a favour that you were willing to lay aside your gravity and play the courtier upon my request,

which I see you can do so well when you please."

Evidently Whitelocke knew how to deal with the Queen who required Doctors of Divinity to play battledore and shuttlecock,—unbending with more dignity than they did. His manner with her would seem to have been that of a father with a skittish daughter: he tells us of yet another occasion on which he humoured her inclination for friskiness.

It was on May Day, when he was permitted to offer her an entertainment in the English style. He not only gave her a banquet which tempted her to "eat and drink more than she used to do in three or four days at her own table"; he also found her "full of pleasantness and gaiety of spirit both in supper-time and afterwards," in the following manner—

"Among other frolics" (he says) "she commanded Whitelocke to teach her ladies the English salutation, which, after some pretty defences, their lips obeyed, and Whitelocke most readily . . . and her discourse was all of mirth and drollery, wherein Whitelocke endeavoured to answer her, and the rest of the company did their parts."

Whether Christina herself took lessons in "the English salutation" does not appear,—perhaps she already knew it; but these stories, at any rate, show us fairly well how Whitelocke

regarded her. He was not overawed,—he did not take her too seriously. As soon would the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge be overawed by a Girton girl because she was reported to write brilliant iambics! She remained just a "young lady" to him. His cue was to pat her paternally and approvingly on the back when she did well; to descend a little way towards her level and humour her when she was gay; to admonish her when the gaiety was excessive; to give her good advice out of the vast storehouse of his experience. No doubt he "had a way with him" which Christina liked even when he gave her "a talking to" on the impropriety of dancing on the Sabbath; and that is how it came about that she proposed to tell him a secret and ask his advice—

Queen: "I shall surprise you with something that I intend to communicate to you; but it must be under secrecy."

Whitelocke: "Madam, we that have been versed in the affairs of England do not use to be surprised with the discourse of a young lady. Whatsoever Your Majesty shall think fit to impart to me, and command to be under secrecy, shall be faithfully obeyed by me."

What she should tell him, Christina continued, she had as yet told to no one else. She told it now because she desired advice; and then she came out with it—

"Sir, this it is. I have it in my thoughts and resolution to quit the Crown of Sweden, and to retire myself unto a private life, as much more suitable to my contentment than the great cares and troubles attendant upon the government of my kingdom; and what think you of this resolution?"

It was a little disingenuous. The resolution was not so new as all that,—the secret had already been imparted to a good many others. Chanut, for one, had been taken into Christina's confidence long before Whitelocke. Nor did she impart all her reasons for her decision,—the religious reason, which would not have appealed to Whitelocke, was withheld: we will deal with that reason in its place. But she had a woman's desire to be advised to do the thing which she had made up her mind to do; and she had ulterior motives, which will appear. So she and Whitelocke argued the matter out for the space of about three hours.

He spoke of the duty which a queen owed to her subjects; she replied that her successor would be much more competent than she was to discharge that duty. He then warned her of certain possible consequences of her abdication—a diminished income and affronts from time-serving courtiers who now cringed and fawned before her; and to these arguments also she had her answer ready. Her tastes, she protested, were very simple: "I can content

myself with very little; and for servants, with a lackey and a chambermaid." As for the threatened disrespect: "I look upon such things as these as the course of this world, and shall expect such scorns, and be prepared to contemn them."

So Christina adhered to her opinion, and Whitelocke to his; and presently Whitelocke discovered that the secret which had been communicated to him was already *secret de Polichinelle*, and that it had been communicated to him for a particular private reason: because Christina wanted a secret article included in the projected Treaty, empowering Cromwell to repudiate his engagements if her own retiring allowance was not punctually paid. That, however, was altogether too feminine a proposal to be practicable. Christina did not insist upon it; and the business being concluded, the farewells were said. Gifts were exchanged; and Whitelocke received an invitation to visit the Queen in Pomerania, where, she said, she proposed to take the waters. One may quote a final scrap of dialogue—

Queen: "If you will come to me into Pomerland, you shall be as welcome as any man living, and we will be merry together."

Whitelocke: "I humbly thank Your Majesty for your great favour to your servant, who hath a wife and children enough to people a province in Pomerland, and I shall bring them all thither to do Your Majesty service."

Queen: "If you will bring your lady and all your children and family thither, and settle yourself there, you shall want nothing in my power, and shall be welcome to me."

But that was only politeness: interesting chiefly as proving that the Puritan as well as the Queen could, on occasion, grace life with agreeable fibs. Not Pomerania but Rome was Christina's destination; and Whitelocke had no intention of visiting her either in Pomerania or anywhere else.

Nor was he really as deeply in her confidence as he had flattered himself. His portrait of her is valuable as a corrective of certain other portraits; but the true story of her abdication, and her motives for it, must be sought from other sources.

CHAPTER XI

Christina's conversion to Roman Catholicism—Her confidences on the subject to Chanut—Her reasons for changing her religion—The seed sown by Father Marcedo—The evangelists sent from Rome—Prolonged argument and ultimate conviction

WHITELOCKE'S picture of Christina has its value, though he did not understand her. In her cleverness he saw only a bright scholar's precocity; in her proposal to descend from the throne only a "young lady's" capricious whim. It did not occur to him that the "young lady," who seemed to be soaking in his words of mature wisdom, might really be playing with him and keeping back a portion of her thoughts. Yet that is not an infrequent way with young ladies. It may even have been the way, sometimes, of Mrs. and the Misses Whitelocke; and it was certainly Christina's way. She was an infinitely more complex young lady than the grave old Puritan imagined.

It was not true that she proposed to quit her throne merely for the sake of the greater calm of a private station. She also meant to change her religion; and she told Whitelocke nothing about that. Nor was it true that Whitelocke was, as she let him think, the first recipient of her confidences.

Long before she confided in him she had confided, as we know, in Chanut; and Whitelocke, in fact, prints the letter to Chanut which makes this clear, though without appearing to perceive that it contradicts Christina's statement that she had first sought advice from himself.

"You know" (Christina wrote to Chanut on February 26, 1653) "that this fancy hath continued with me a long time, and that it hath not been without consideration. It is eight years since I formed this resolution, and at least five since I communicated it to you. In all that time nothing has happened to make me change my mind."

For years, she adds, she has been working towards the end which she now proposes to accomplish. She perceives that her action will be like the ringing down of the curtain on a drama; but she is indifferent to the applause or the lack of it. The many will doubtless censure; but the few will approve; and Chanut will be one of the few. She is quite content that the multitude shall be puzzled as to her motives. She despises the multitude,—she is capable of laughing at them. Though she will have plenty of leisure henceforward, she will devote none of it to worrying about their criticisms of her conduct. On the contrary, resigning without regret the advantages which she has enjoyed without improper pride, she will devote her time to

examining her past life and correcting her faults, albeit without expressing any shocked surprise at them, or regarding them as matters to be repented of in sackcloth and ashes. Nor is she acting without consideration of the designs and decrees of Providence, though she is not at all sure what these may be—

"If Providence should still deign to take the trouble to direct my affairs for me, I shall submit to the divine will with all proper respect and resignation. If Providence leaves me to myself, I shall devote the faculties divinely bestowed upon me to the pursuit of happiness. And I shall achieve happiness, feeling sure that I have nothing to fear from either God or men; and the rest of my life shall be consecrated to familiarising myself with these thoughts, and watching from the safety of the haven the troubles of those who are still agitated by the storms of life because they have never given their minds to such reflections. I am happy, am I not? Many would envy me if they knew my happiness; but you are too good a friend to envy me. You will sympathise, rather, seeing that I have the frankness to confess that I derive a goodly share of these sentiments from my conversations with you."

That is a real confidence,—differing from the conversations with Whitelocke as a confidence differs from an apology. The heart speaks in it,

even if the facts are scamped. There was no need for Christina to tell Chanut the facts,—he knew them. He might protest, for form's sake; but he would also admire and express his admiration,—sympathise and express his sympathy,—realising that Christina's decision was no sudden and irresponsible caprice, but the inevitable climax of a prolonged drama of the soul.

For Christina had long, as he knew, uneasily lived a double life; the life of a queen who was the illustrious figure-head of a country glorious in war; and the life of a woman to whom the routine of pomp was wearisome, and whose æsthetic sensibilities bade her aim at self-development, self-perfection, and self-expression. Alike in study and in frivolity, the struggle between the two sides of her nature had proceeded; but the scholars had hardly got nearer to perceiving it than the statesmen. To some of them she had appeared merely a blue-stocking; while others —like the Doctor of Divinity with whom she insisted on playing battledore and shuttlecock—had been shocked to see in her nothing but a romp.

She had been both these things at her hours, in response to the influences working on her; the abiding influence being the neurotic strain which impelled her to exaggerate in all things. But those traits were superficial. The essence was the desire to be herself and not the incarnation of her country; to live her own life, not the corporate life of Sweden. No women, and only a few men, had been accorded glimpses

at this real self; but they could see that her motives, though apparently various, hung together. She was worried; religious unrest was mixed up with her worries; but the worries and the unrest were the occasion rather than the causes of the great renunciation on which she had determined.

She was worried with plots, opposition, hostility of sundry kinds. Her statesmen were jealous of her scholars; her countrymen were jealous of the foreigners. Different factions were pulling different ways. The peasants wanted her to take their part against the nobles; the nobles wanted her to take their part against the peasants. There were even plots against her life, though it can hardly be said that her life was in any real danger from them. The disorder in the finances, which was really due to the expenses of the Thirty Years War, was attributed to her extravagance; and satires were circulated on the subject: notably a poem in which the following imaginary dialogues occurred—

"Beaulieu," asked the Queen of her Master of the Ceremonies, "how much does a ballet cost?"

"About ten thousand dollars, Your Majesty."

"What! Is that all? Get the money from the Treasurer at once."

And then again—

"John Holm," asked the Queen of her Cham-

berlain, " what are people talking about in the city ? "

" They find that the time hangs heavily and tediously because Your Majesty no longer dances."

" Well, Beaulieu," said the Queen, turning to the Master of the Ceremonies, " prepare a ball for the amusement of the people. How much does a ball cost ? "

" About twenty thousand dollars, Your Majesty."

" Very well ! Go to the Treasurer and tell him to give you the money ! "

The implied charge was not altogether unfounded. Christina had begun to fling money about recklessly from the very day of her Coronation, when her accession was honoured with a salute of no less than 1800 guns, and wine, both red and white, spouted from the fountains all day long. But these things did not really matter. Christina could have conciliated her critics by mending her ways ; or she could have defied them. Sedition does not seem to have frightened her. But she disliked the atmosphere of political conflict and intrigue. She had no real interest in the business,—she knew a better way.

On the religious side, too, she had found a way which pleased her better than that of the long-winded Lutherans; though it would be an error to think of her as a woman to whom nothing but religion mattered. In later life,

indeed, when she wrote her *Memoirs*, she was persuaded that she had cheerfully resigned precious possessions for the sake of the Gospel and the Kingdom; but, in that distant view of the matter, she had evidently got the perspective wrong. Her tone, at the time, was different; for, on the very eve of her own change of religion, we find her writing to Prince Frederick of Hesse to dissuade him from changing his—

"You must be aware" (she urged) "how much converts are hated by those whom they leave, and you must know from many famous examples that they are despised by those whom they join. Consider how the belief in his constancy affects the reputation of a prince, and be assured that your fame will suffer if you are guilty of such a fault."

The inconsistency is too glaring to be explained except on the assumption that, in the choice of a religion, as in the other affairs of life, circumstances alter cases: a common assumption in royal circles ever since the day when Henri IV. declared Paris to be worth a mass. Christina, in fact, speaks of herself, in this very letter, as being of "a third religion," and therefore able to discuss the other two religions impartially. We must be content to make what we can of her attitude and her arguments when we come to piece together the story, such as it is, of her conversion.

There was no *coup-de-foudre*, such as has marked the great historical conversions from the time of St. Paul to that of General Booth. It was a gradual process, ending, indeed, in a sort of rapt mysticism, but originating in an impulse partly æsthetic and partly philosophic. Disgust with the aridities of Lutheran hair-splitting, the æsthetic inadequacy of Lutheran ritual, and the awful length of Lutheran sermons, furnished the starting-point: as we have seen, Christina's first manifestation of religious originality was to misbehave in church. She was also, like most clever young women, instinctively and intensely anxious to be "in the movement"; and those were days when, everywhere except in England, the prevalent spiritual movement was back to Rome. Many eminent scholars had 'verted or were 'verting; and it may well have seemed to Christina that all the clever people, and all the nice people, were Catholics.

How or when the seed was first sown one cannot say. She herself attributes her change of heart to a serious illness which overtook her in 1648. "It was in this sickness," she writes, "that I made a vow to quit all and become a Catholic if God would save my life"; but, if she made the vow at that date, she certainly did not hurry to fulfil it, as her attempt, made four years later, to dissuade Frederick of Hesse from becoming a Catholic most clearly shows. Her enemies, on the other hand, have attributed her

conversion to the evil influence of Dr. Bourdelot ; but that is a still less credible theory,—not only because Bourdelot is said to have been an atheist, but also because of the improbability that such a woman as Christina would have gone to a practical joker for religious advice.

Most likely, therefore, the first effective evangelists were Chanut and Descartes. The former was the most sympathetic and the latter the cleverest man whom Christina had ever met. And they were both Catholics of a kind : the kind which, somehow or other,—in virtue, as it were, of the disposition of their minds in water-tight compartments,—contrive to reconcile profound and daring speculation with a theoretical acceptance of the papal authority in the domain of dogma. It does not much matter whether they actually sowed the seed or only prepared the soil, or whether the effect of their conversations was accidental or designed.

But then came Father Macedo, a Jesuit, and Confessor to the Portuguese Ambassador. The Ambassador, who knew no Latin, sometimes employed him as an interpreter ; and he seized the opportunity of spreading the light at times when he was supposed to be discussing diplomatic business. If he did not shake Christina's faith, at least he aroused her curiosity. It was arranged between him and her, under the unsuspecting Ambassador's nose, that machinery should be set in motion for her conversion : that the General of the Jesuit Order should be asked

to send two of his best men to Sweden to reason with her. Perhaps, delighting in theological dialectics, she wished to show that she could give a good account of herself in controversy; or it may be that intellectual pride forbade her to yield, except to the Pope's picked champions.

Macedo, at any rate, accepted the commission and set out for Rome. The Ambassador refused him leave of absence; but he dispensed with it, and departed secretly, holding that his duty to the Church ranked before his duty to the man who only paid his salary. Nor was his flight altogether without adventure. He shivered all night on a desolate rock while waiting for the vessel which was to take him off. The scandalous report was spread that he had not gone alone, but had taken a lady with him on a gallant excursion. A hue and cry was raised. The captain of a Swedish man-of-war was sent in pursuit, —albeit with secret instructions from Christina on no account to catch the fugitive: a series of exciting incidents which may well have appealed to her appreciation of the romantic, mysterious, and spectacular.

And then, in due course, the emissaries of the Jesuit General arrived: Francesco Malines, Professor of Theology at Turin, and Paul Casati, Professor of Mathematics at Rome; but still an air of mystery — deeper mystery than even before—enveloped the proceedings. The emissaries did not announce themselves: they knew—or feared—that a Protestant mob would

tear them limb from limb if their errand were suspected. They appeared, therefore, as ordinary Italian gentlemen travelling for their pleasure, and were presented at Court in that character, leaving it to Christina to divine their true identity and question them. She had seen them several times before she penetrated their disguise; but then there was a whispered colloquy, as between the partners in some dark conspiracy of melodrama—

"Are you those whom I expect?"
"We are."
"Have you letters for me?"
"We have."
"Not a word of them to any one. Be silent as the grave!"

One can almost see her putting her finger to her lips, not exactly in jest, but with a certain satisfaction at having a secret which even her sagacious Chancellor must not be allowed to penetrate: she was still young enough to take her pleasure in that way. The next thing was to find pretexts for private conversations with the missionaries, and even to play with them something very much akin to a comedy: putting posers to them as if to make it clear that she was worth converting because she was hard to convert,—affecting to be obdurate, even after she had made up her mind to yield.

The position which she chose to defend would seem to have been that of a sceptic rather

than an orthodox Protestant; and it was a fixed idea with her, in later years, that she had never in her life believed the Lutheran tenets. We have only her word for that; but we can easily conceive that Catholicism appealed to her by its trick of whittling away intellectual difficulties, instead of insisting upon a definite intellectual attitude towards a vast number of undemonstrable propositions. For that is unquestionably the line of attack by which Catholicism sometimes subdues superior minds.

Protestantism affirms at once the right of private judgment and the duty of privately judging in favour of particular conclusions. But that is, of course, to confer a privilege with one hand and take it away with the other, and to assume authority in the very act of denying it: an inconsistency which always seems either painful or absurd to those who are acute enough to detect it.

Catholicism, at any rate, perceives and avoids that pitfall. It no more asks any Catholic to have an opinion of his own about any doctrinal subtlety than the Professor of Mathematics expects the man in the street to have opinions of his own about the infinitesimal calculus. Its view is, rather, that, as mathematics are left to mathematicians, so theology should be left to theologians; that whatever appears to be "contrary to reason" shall be regarded as "above reason"; that the faithful shall leave whatever puzzles them to the Church—

that is to say, to the Pope. If the Pope be mistaken—perish the thought!—the responsibility is his. The convert need not worry, but may confess his sins and be absolved.

That is the position. It seems to have both pros and cons, but we need not go into them. Enough to note it, and to note also how much more powerfully than Protestantism it appeals to those who combine dialectical acumen with mystical inclinations. Christina was such a one; and hence her sudden capitulation after strenuous resistance. She argued everything: the distinction between good and evil; the existence of God; the immortality of the soul. But then she added, to the intense astonishment of the evangelists who believed that she was trying to drive them into a corner: "Perhaps, after all, I am nearer to becoming a Catholic than you suppose."

"When we heard that," said Casati, "we felt like men raised from the dead"; and the rest was only detail. Supposing she were admitted into the Church, Christina asked, would the Pope accord her a dispensation to receive the Lord's Supper, once a year, according to the Lutheran rites? The answer was that the Pope would assuredly lend himself to no such deception; and that settled it—

"The die is cast," said Christina. "I must resign my crown."

CHAPTER XII

The great renunciation—Christina abdicates in favour of her cousin, Charles Gustavus—Picturesque details of the ceremony—Christina's departure—Her reasons for expediting it—Attempt to detain her—Across the Danish frontier—Free to live her own life at last

THE hour for the great renunciation had come; and it would be idle to waste further words on inquiry into the degree of Christina's sincerity in invoking a religious motive for it. She was too hysterical to be a conscious hypocrite in great matters; but she had too open a mind to be a bigot or a fanatic, and looked to Catholicism for religious repose rather than for religious stimulation. Her determining desire was evidently for moral, intellectual, and æsthetic elbow-room, —the Ibsen heroine's desire for escape from the doll's house, summed up in the phrase: *Je veux vivre de ma vie!*

She had made a previous effort to escape as far back as 1651, almost immediately after her coronation; and the Swedes, with their frugal minds, had protested that, if she meant to abdicate, she ought to have spared the country the expense of that ceremonial. "What!" they had asked. "Was the coronation, then, only a spectacle arranged for Her Majesty's amuse-

ment ? " And the members of her Council had, at the same time, opposed her design with moral maxims. " Changes," they had gravely urged, " seldom do good, and frequently do harm." A solemn engagement had been entered into, and must not be lightly broken. As for that leisure which Christina desired for the living of her own life in her own way, they were not so sure either that it would be good for her or that she had any right to seek it—

" We do not know " (they represented) " that Your Majesty would lead a more peaceful life after abdicating, for the future is hidden from our eyes ; nor are we satisfied that repose would be consistent with Your Majesty's duty. Cares and anxieties are common to mankind ; and they specially appertain to sovereign rulers, whose duty it is to seek their pleasure, and find their happiness, in work."

It was spoken like a copy-book ; and the sagacious Oxenstiern summed it all up in phrases worthy of Polonius, concluding with the threat that there would be wholesale resignations in high places, throwing the entire country into confusion, if the Queen did not give way. So Christina yielded ; and one may fairly conjecture that she would not have been treated very generously in the matter of her retiring allowance if she had stood out. None the less, being convinced against her will, she was of the same opinion

still; and it was only a case of *reculer pour mieux sauter*. This time the conditions were more favourable; and she had committed herself, and gone too far to turn back, before communicating her decision to her people. Casati had been dispatched to Rome to arrange for her welcome there; and she now sprang her resolution on the assembled Senate. For three years, she said, she had been thinking the matter over. It had been agreed that her cousin, Charles Gustavus, should succeed her. Now—

"I have decided, for many reasons, to abdicate. My mind is made up, and I shall not change it. I am not, therefore, asking your opinion, but only your assistance in settling matters and arranging for the secure and tranquil succession of the Prince."

The Senators, naturally, were not hindered from giving their opinion by the mere fact that they were not asked for it. They gave it in no measured terms, speaking of the proposal as an affront to God, and of those, whoever they might be, who had counselled it as "treacherous knaves." But Christina remained firm, sustained by her religious motive, and threw out mystifying hints. Her reasons, she said, were only known to God, but would, in due course, and before long, be disclosed. And also—

"If you knew the secret reason, which for

the present I have to conceal, then my conduct would appear less strange to you."

It does not appear that they divined her meaning; but they perceived that she meant what she said: *Ce que femme veut Dieu le veut.* They would not allow her to stipulate, as she wished to do, that, in the event of Charles Gustavus leaving no direct heir, he should be succeeded by her young favourite Tott,—her concern with the Swedish succession must end with her retirement. They would not permit her to retain, as she proposed that she should, the sovereignty, as well as the revenues, of certain towns and islands,—if she abdicated at all, she must abdicate completely. But they fell in with her views in other respects, promising her a good income, and arranged a suitable ceremony for her formal resignation of her royal rights. Or rather, there were two such ceremonies: one in the Diet, and the other in the Senate.

The former, of which Whitelocke has given us an account, was chiefly remarkable for the unprepared protest of the so-called Marshal of the Boors,—the leader of the peasant party. He was "a plain country fellow, in his clouted shoon and other habits answerable"; and he spoke "without any *congés* or ceremony at all"—

"O Lord God, Madam, what do you mean to

do ? It troubles us to hear you speak of forsaking those that love you as well as we do. Can you be better than you are ? You are Queen of all these countries, and if you leave this large kingdom, where will you get such another ? "

That was his artless beginning ; and the end of his appeal was similar—

" Your father was an honest gentleman and a good king, and very stirring in the world ; we obeyed him and loved him as long as he lived ; and you are his own child, and have governed us very well, and we love you with all our hearts ; and the Prince is an honest gentleman, and when his time comes we shall be ready to do our duties to him as we do to you ; but as long as you live we are not willing to part with you, and, therefore, I pray, Madam, do not part with us."

Having so spoken, the peasant " waddled up to the Queen," and " took her hand and shook it heartily," and then " pulled out of his pocket a foul handkerchief, and wiped the tears from his eyes." His speech seemed to Whitelocke, as he afterwards said to Christina, to be " pure and clear natural eloquence, without any forced strain " ; and then this dialogue ensued—

Queen : " I think he spake from his heart."

Whitelocke : " I believe he did, and acted so too, especially when he wiped his eyes."

Queen: "He showed his affection to me in that posture more than greater men did in their spheres."

But Christina was no more to be moved by the mean man's tears than by the great men's copy-book morality. Nor was her purpose shaken by her mother's tears, though her mother "cried all night." It took so little to make Marie-Eléonore cry all night: she was a helpless creature, and that was her ordinary way of confessing her helplessness. Christina would probably have liked to shake her,—just as a brilliant, self-willed, and self-reliant Girton girl would often like to shake a weeping and unreasonable Victorian mother. As it was, she endured the tears, offered no explanations, and continued her arrangements for disposing of her own life as she thought best.

The final scene took place on June 6, 1654, in solemn and impressive circumstances; the Act of Abdication being read aloud in her presence and that of Charles Gustavus and the Senate. The Act whereby her successor guaranteed her revenues was also read; and both Acts were duly and solemnly signed. That done, Christina was invested, for the last time, with the royal robes. She was apparelled in a simple white robe, and wore her crown; in her left hand was the sceptre, and in her right hand the emblematic golden ball. A sword and a golden key were carried before her by the Grand

Marshal and the Lord High Treasurer; and the procession thus formed took its slow way into the great Hall of the Palace, where were assembled the Ministers, the Nobility, and the Members of the Court.

Christina took her place, for the last time, on the throne: a magnificent silver throne, the gift of Magnus de la Gardie, once her favourite and now her bitter enemy. Behind her were stationed the Chamberlain and the Captain of the Royal Guard. Beside her stood Charles Gustavus, habited in black, as if to indicate that he thought of the day of his preferment as a day of mourning. The Act of Abdication was read yet again and handed to him. Then Count Brahé—he who had most vehemently opposed her abdication, speaking of it as an affront to God—was summoned to remove the crown from her head. He would not; so she removed it herself and placed it in his hands. She also divested herself of the other royal insignia, which were laid upon a table,—all except her mantle, which her courtiers cut to tatters, in order that each of them might keep a scrap of it as memorial of her.

Her farewell address followed. One finds little in the report of it beyond the protestation that, living in difficult times, she had tried to do her duty, and felt no qualms of conscience, but was confident that her cousin would follow worthily in the steps of her father, Gustavus Adolphus. Her listeners nevertheless were

moved to tears, albeit very different tears from those which had been shed by Marie-Eléonore,—amazed at the scale of values which let her abandon of her own free will an exalted station to which so many would have been willing to wade through blood and slaughter. The rest was the usual, and inevitable interchange of compliments: compliments to Christina on the great qualities which she had shown; compliments to Charles Gustavus on the great qualities which he was presumed to possess; compliments to the Ministers and Senators on the sagacity with which they had helped, and would doubtless continue to help, in the direction of affairs. Charles Gustavus was crowned the same afternoon,—quietly as was proper to an occasion which was more sad than joyous; and Christina's last royal act was to command a general release of prisoners.

She left Upsala the same night, setting out in a storm of rain in her great haste to get away. Charles Gustavus pressed her to remain a little longer; but she would not. "How can you wish me to?" she asked. "How can you expect me to stay to see another enjoying the power which was so lately mine?" But she had other than sentimental reasons for hurrying her departure. There were those who wished to detain her on the ground that, as her income was derived from the Swedish taxpayers, she must not be allowed to go abroad to spend it. The report of her conversion had also got about;

and the clergy talked of detaining her in Sweden in the sacred cause of Protestantism. But she had not descended from the Swedish throne in order to become a Swedish subject: her desire was not for a narrower but for a larger life. So she must make haste, even though she fibbed in order to account for her hurry, giving out, as she had already given out to Whitelocke, that she was going to Spa to take the waters.

What she really wanted, however, was not medicinal treatment, but leisure for an artistic and intellectual life. *Sedes hæc solio potior* was the motto of a medal which she caused to be struck in celebration of her retirement: a motto signifying that a place on Parnassus was more to her than a seat on a throne. She set the same view forth in letters which she wrote, in the brief interval between her abdication and her departure from Swedish soil, to the Prince de Condé and to the members of the French Academy of Letters—

"I will confess to you" (she wrote to the former) "that the leisure which I have so intensely desired has been bought at a high price; but I shall never regret having paid that price for it, and shall never blacken an action for which I am very pleased with myself by any base repentance."

To the latter she wrote—

"I have always had the highest esteem for

you because I have always had the highest esteem for virtue; and I doubt not that you will show me as much friendship in the solitude of my private life as you exhibited towards me when I was on the throne. My love of literature, which I shall now be able to cultivate at my ease and leisure, leads me to hope that you will sometimes communicate your works to me: works always worthy of your high reputation, and written in the language which will generally, henceforth, be mine."

Thus she took steps to prepare herself a welcome in France, as she had previously taken steps to prepare herself a welcome in Rome. There remained nothing but to gather her household together, and ride, suitably escorted, to the frontier. Once more Charles Gustavus pressed her to stay,—and even to stay as his consort; but she would not. If she had wished to marry, she said, she would not have abdicated first: not a very gracious reply, if correctly reported,—but reports of that sort are never very trustworthy. And so over the Danish border to liberty. Her first act, after crossing the border, was to have her long hair cut short, and dress herself as a boy. Her first speech is said to have been—

"Free, at last, and out of a country which I hope never to see again!"

Which meant, of course, not that she really

hated Sweden, or had left painful memories in the country of her birth; but that she rejoiced beyond measure at the prospect, now at last, after so many delays, on the point of being realised, of living her own life in her own way, untroubled by the harassing cares of State, and unrestricted by tiresome conventions.

CHAPTER XIII

What the world thought of Christina's abdication—Her travels —Denmark—Hamburg—Brussels—Her private reception into the Church at Brussels—Her manner of life there—Her delight at her escape from Lutheran sermons

THERE were those who compared Christina's departure to that of the Israelites, who did not leave Egypt without first spoiling the Egyptians. Careless of money, she had flung it about without counting it; but others have counted it for her. At the time of her accession the expenses of the Royal Household absorbed only about three per cent. of the total revenue of the country; at the time of her departure she was spending twenty per cent. of that revenue on herself and her friends. It was not that she was deliberately extravagant, but merely that she liked to do things stylishly and be generous. She distributed pensions as freely as titles; and she distributed those so lavishly that even her tailor got one.

Her "collections," too, had cost her a great deal. She collected books, pictures, statues, cameos, miniatures, furniture, bric-a-brac,—everything which could appeal to a collector of literary and artistic taste; and though

the collections were paid for with public money, she regarded them as her private property. She packed them all up, and took them with her,—or, rather, had them dispatched to await arrival. It was as though an English sovereign should abdicate and carry off the contents of the National Gallery and the British and South Kensington Museums, as well as the Crown Jewels and the furniture and fittings of Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace. The proceeding, thus stated, sounds monstrous; but the line between the property of the State and the property of the sovereign was not, in those days, very clearly drawn; and the best excuse for the removal is that the Swedes permitted it. The treasures of art were to them merely knick-knacks,—if Christina wanted her knick-knacks, she was welcome to them.

She did want them,—they were a part of the necessary stock-in-trade for the magnificent life of self-development which she had planned. That their removal arrested the progress of Sweden towards the higher culture is likely enough; but the flowers of culture were, as we have seen, exotic growths in Sweden. Christina had planted them; and if Christina did not remain to water them they would languish. That, probably, was her countrymen's view of the matter as well as hers. At all events, she went off well provided with the apparatus of culture: travelling simply at first, so as not to excite remark, but with no intention of confining

herself to the simple life for ever. Not simplicity but self-development was the end she contemplated; and though the two things are compatible for some of us, Christina did not identify them. She aspired to develop, perfect, and express herself in public,—in the centre, as it were, of the European stage; and she meant that stage to be nobly and artistically set, so that all the world might wonder.

And of course the world did wonder, though not all the world approved. The conversion, when made known, divided opinion sharply; and even before it was made known the air was thick at once with eulogistic elegiacs and savage satires. "Where is this lady," the Prince de Condé asked, "who has so lightly abandoned the crown for which we others fight, pursuing it without attaining it throughout our lives?" "Woe upon our Muses," wrote the scholar Medonius, "if we fail to transmit to posterity this unprecedented action on the part of an incomparable Queen, whose grandeur of mind surpasses all that history tells us about the heroes of antiquity!" "She resigned because she felt that her subjects were unworthy of her," declared the Jesuit Father d'Auvrigny. "I am so astonished at what I hear that I feel as if I were living in a dream," exclaimed Bochart. He could not but approve, he said, her contempt for the glories of this world; he rejoiced at the prospect that her travels might give him the opportunity of seeing her again; but yet he had his doubts—

"My heart bleeds when I think that she is voluntarily depriving herself of so many means of doing good,—never to be recovered when once she has let go of them. She will regret what she has done a thousand times when it is too late and the damage is irremediable, if only because of the unfavourable comments which most people will make. For most people are only too glad of a pretext for barking at the heels of the great."

The great scholar evidently considered that the patronage and endowment of scholars was the noblest work of queens. Foreseeing the extinction, or at least the diminution, of this source of supply for humanists who turned out elegant copies of complimentary verse, he viewed the prospect with a divided mind. He perceived Christina's superiority to conventional ideals; but he also could not help thinking of her as one who had put her hand to the plough and then turned back. Mme de Longueville, who heard the news from Bourdelot, had no such need for mixing her emotions. She wrote to the physician in praise of "the heroic act of our great Queen"—

"She is, in truth, incomparable" (she added). "One may justly say that, in quitting one Crown, she has shown herself worth of all the Crowns in the world, and that, by ceasing to reign over her own subjects, she has established her title to reign over the earth. Nothing is easier than to

quit a throne which has exposed its occupant to a long series of misfortunes . . . but there is no virtue more exalted than that of the sovereign who retires voluntarily from a throne which is well established and despises a great position which has offered none but agreeable experiences. . . .

". . . Should Her Majesty's conversion come as the crown and climax of her admirable self-abnegation, we shall be able to affirm that no human being has ever attained to a more dazzling glory."

So the world talked—all the world talking at once with a confusing noise. Christina's business was everybody's business; and she was not displeased that it should be so. If she was earnest, she also liked to be interesting; so much so that even a modern historian with the keen insight of Arvède Barine has raised the question whether she was not deliberately playing a practical joke on Europe.

She was not exactly doing that; but it delighted her, as it does sometimes delight clever people, to find her proceedings presenting an enigma to her intellectual inferiors; and she soon received a compliment of the kind which she valued. She began her travels, as has been mentioned, in male attire, giving out that she was the son of Count Dohna; and the Queen of Denmark, devoured by curiosity, disguised herself as a servant-maid, and waited on the strange

traveller in a Danish inn. The disguise was penetrated; and Christina gratified her sense of humour by telling the servant exactly what she thought of the Queen.

The next stage was Hamburg, where Christina arrived on July 10, and remained about three weeks. She there accepted the hospitality of a Jewish banker, and was denounced from the pulpits of the town for doing so. Her reply—that Jesus Christ was Himself a Jew and had, throughout His life, consorted with Jews—was a reasonably adequate rejoinder. It so impressed one of the clergy that he now preached in the contrary sense, with the inevitable references to the Queen of Sheba; but even for him there was a painful surprise in store. He received a gold chain in token of Christina's admiration of his sermon; but presently he discovered that she had left a book behind her in her pew. He looked at it,—it was a Virgil. The Queen who had honoured him was so little devout that she had been reading Virgil while he was preaching.

A few days later, after having been entertained by the Landgrave of Hesse, Christina resumed her male attire, and set out again on her journey, in top-boots, wearing a black wig, and carrying a carbine over her shoulder and a sword hanging at her side. In that costume she visited the Jesuits' College at Münster, to which she presented one hundred ducats, after jesting with the Fathers on the subject of Jesuit morality and the Pauline cunning with which they were

"all things to all men." She kept up her masculine character by pretending to make love to a girl whom she met on the road; and she proceeded by way of Deventer, Amesfort, and Utrecht to Antwerp, where she once more acknowledged her identity and consented to receive visitors.

There was no hurry: those were days when things went slowly in peace as well as in war. At a date when a war could last for thirty years the preparations for a change of heart could very well be spun out for a twelvemonth,—especially when the heart appertained to the august bosom of a queen. There was, as it were, a "protocol" of conversion to be arranged; messengers had to go to and fro, crossing Europe and returning, to settle the how and the when and the where. The Pope happened to die in the midst of the transaction; and the result of the conclave for the election of his successor had to be awaited. The electing Cardinals were not men to be hustled; and it took them about eight months to promote Alexander VII. to the throne of Innocent X. Christina was quite willing to wait, enjoying her new liberty at leisure.

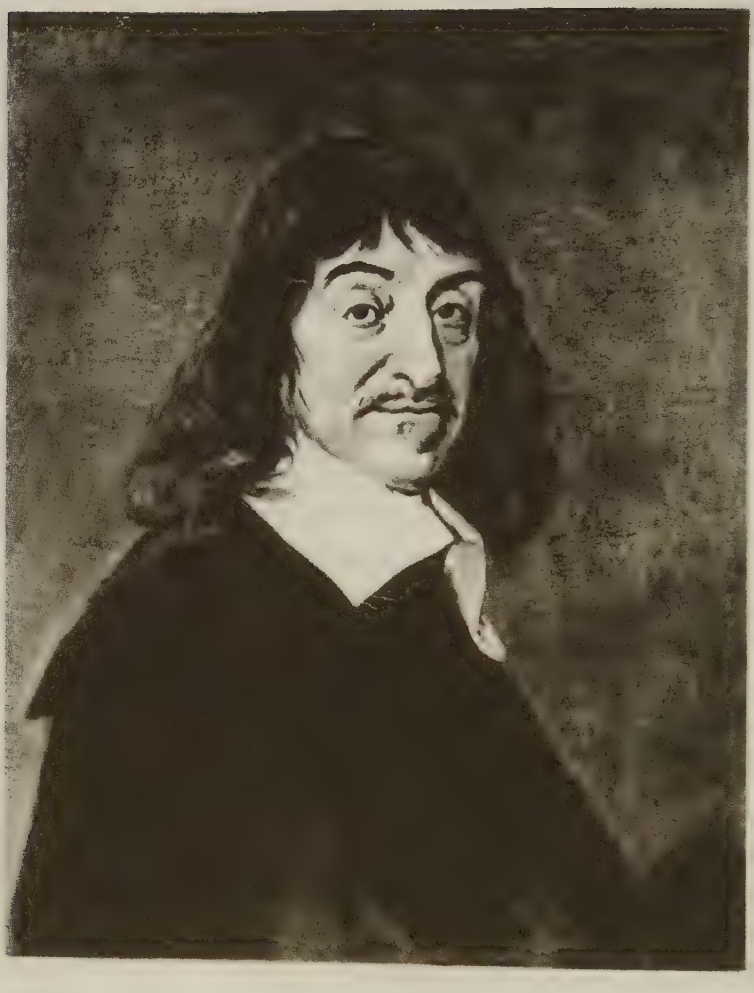
Her only trouble, at the moment, was as to her dignity and the homage due to it. She was, not unnaturally, sensitive to social slights; and there were no undisputed precedents determining the degree of ceremony with which a queen *in partibus* should be approached. As Queen of Sweden, Christina had often thrown

etiquette to the winds ; as a queen in exile, she was more exacting. It was one thing, she felt, to unbend, and quite another to be unbent. Hence trouble when the Prince de Condé proposed to call. He was Christina's hero : she had told Whitelocke that she ranked him next to Cromwell among great men,—and she had probably told his countrymen that she ranked him above Cromwell. But she would not agree to descend to the foot of the stairs to meet him ; and he said that he would not call unless she did. When she presently met him, by accident, in a public place, she was observed to converse with him " decorously but coldly," remarking : " Cousin, who would have believed, ten years ago, that we were destined to meet like this ? "

A similar meeting with Elizabeth of Bohemia and her daughter is said to have been frustrated by a similar reason. They went to the theatre, it is related, in order to stare at Christina, coming specially from The Hague for the purpose, but would not call for fear lest they should not be received as royalties. There may be a grain of truth in the story ; but one suspects another motive : that the memory of Descartes fell as a cold shadow between them. We have seen already how Christina took Princess Elizabeth's philosopher away from her, — what glorious apparel the philosopher put on when he left the one lady for the other, and how fruitless had been his endeavour to make their common affection

for himself a bond of friendship between them. We may fairly suppose that Elizabeth had neither forgotten nor forgiven ; we may even guess that, in her inmost heart, she charged Christina with having killed Descartes by so cruelly requiring him to lecture on metaphysics in a cold library at a ridiculously early hour,—and that she now desired not to show courtesy, but merely to satisfy curiosity.

Another visitor was Count Tott, — the " favourite " of Whitelocke's narrative. He came as an Ambassador, charged to deliver good advice : to implore Christina to remain a Protestant, and to return to Sweden when she was tired of travelling. She received him agreeably, but did not commit herself, having quite other plans. It is said—one does not know with what truth—that Tott had, by this time, been succeeded in her favour by Pimentelli, the Spanish Ambassador, who was the confidant of her intention to 'vert. Some of her letters to Pimentelli were opened in the course of their passage through the Low Countries ; and Boreel, the Dutch Ambassador at Paris, remarked that " they would certainly have been taken for love letters by any one unacquainted with the Queen's virtuous character," being " filled with the strongest expressions which the most ardent passion could employ." He does not quote, however ; and Pimentelli was a serious gentleman of forty-eight ; so one must not attach too much importance to this scandal.



Descartes.
from the painting by Franz Hals in the Louvre.

What one does know is that Christina had arranged to meet Pimentelli at Brussels, and that her journey to Brussels was of the nature of a royal progress. She travelled by water, on a barge armed like a gunboat and decorated as if for a pageant. Sightseers lined the canal banks and cheered; soldiers saluted; bells pealed and bonfires blazed; and the distinguished guest entered the city after nightfall through a triumphal arch, illuminated in her honour. Then, at last, she forswore Lutheranism; and though the ceremony of abjuration was supposed to be private, it was not really so. The guns were fired at the instant of her recantation of Protestant heresy; and those chroniclers who say that the coincidence was accidental—or due to a special dispensation of Providence—cannot be believed.

Then the question arose whether this private renunciation would suffice to satisfy the Pope: a matter which could not be settled until the new Pope was elected. The answer, when, at last, it came, was in the negative. If Christina wanted to visit Rome, and to be received with distinction there, she must come as a convert open and avowed. That was the last word of Alexander VII.—a pious Pope who took religion seriously: even the King of Spain besought him in vain to relax the rigour of his ruling. So Christina consented, even at the risk that the Swedes would punish her by reducing her allowance; though whether she did

so from a sense of duty or from a passionate desire to live in Rome one must be content to guess. Rome, at any rate, was the only place in which it quite suited her dignity to take up her permanent abode; since the Pope was the only sovereign whom other sovereigns bowed to as greater than themselves.

So it was arranged that Christina should be received publicly into the Roman Church at Innsbruck; and she formed her suite and made her preparations for the journey. But meanwhile she enjoyed herself; by no means living, so far as outward appearances went, after the manner of one who has, in modern parlance, "found religion." She herself pictures her way of life in a letter to her friend, Ebba Sparre—

"I am very well, and have been received with every honour, and get on well with every one except the Prince de Condé, going nowhere except to Court and to the theatre. My principal occupations are to eat well, to sleep well, to study a little, to chat and to laugh, to entertain myself with French, Spanish, and Italian comedies, and to get through the time pleasantly. Above all, no more sermons for me! I have the profoundest contempt for all their preachers, holding, with Solomon, that one should eat, drink, and be merry, and that all the rest is vanity."

A picture which derives a certain measure of

support from an anecdote indignantly repeated by a discontented Protestant divine—

"Her Majesty" (wrote the divine), "being asked whether she had no ministers of religion or preachers in her suite, replied that she had not. Since her departure from Sweden, she said, she had taken the opportunity of getting rid of all the people who were of no use to her."

Beside which story one should place that of her visit to the Jesuits of Louvain. They proposed to place her, they said, on the panel of saints, next to Saint Brigitta of Sweden; whereto she replied: "I would much prefer to find my name on a panel of philosophers."

It does not sound very religious; but there is no need to be shocked. Catholics do, on the whole, take their religion in a much more joyous and worldly manner than Protestants. Their monks and nuns may—some of them—specialise in austerity; but they do not expect every Catholic to be a specialist in such matters. If the Church has a use for fanatics, it has also a use for those who are penetrated by the *joie de vivre*. In return for their profession of faith it offers them certain guarantees, in virtue of which they may dance and divert themselves without fear of the divine indignation. Their countenances, in consequence, are on the whole pleasanter than those of persons whom evangelical revivalists have frightened into fleeing from the wrath to come.

Christina, at all events, accepted Catholicism in that pleasant spirit; keeping her religion, in a sense, to herself,—accepting the principles of the faith, but leaving the details to the Pope and other professional theologians. There really was no need for her to listen to sermons; for why should any man or woman of ability be bothered to listen to the long-winded discourses of intellectual inferiors? She had heard it all, dozens of times, before; and she could say it all more effectively herself. That was why she had so often talked in church, or played with her dogs, or read Virgil, or tried to go to sleep. The course of staying away from church altogether seemed preferable, and she adopted it, having better ways of spending the time.

We have seen how she spent most of her time. Cardinal Mazarin encouraged her so to spend it by sending a special company of French comedians to Brussels for her entertainment. She also occupied herself in enlarging her library, with the result that the scholar Vossius found further opportunities of stealing her books. And so the days went by until, at last, on September 22, 1655, she and her train of 221 persons—including five women, three monks, and three musicians—set out from Brussels, and wound its leisurely way along the road to Rome.

CHAPTER XIV

Christina's public reception into the Church at Innsbruck—Her journey to Rome—Her reception and life there—Cardinal Colonna loves her in vain—Roman Society objects to her manners—Her departure for France

CHRISTINA could now feel that the eyes of Europe were upon her; which was what she wanted, though, no doubt, she wanted other things as well. The Pope's Legate thought it worth while to count her retinue,—the dispatch giving the result of his enumeration is still in the Vatican Archives. It is as complete as a census-paper, giving us the names and nationalities, not only of the gentlemen in attendance, but also of the grooms, the coachmen, the musicians, and the monks. One likes to picture the Legate going round with a notebook and entering the particulars. Many Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and Belgian noblemen, it appears, jumped at the opportunity of taking a free trip to Italy in Christina's suite; Pimentelli was the only one of the company who paid his own expenses.

Nothing happened on the way,—nothing, at any rate, which need detain us. Charles II. is said to have met Christina at Frankfürt; but we have no information about the interview.

The cavalcade was escorted for some distance out of Brussels by the Archduke Leopold, and was met by other archdukes, together with archduchesses, as it approached Tyrol. At Innsbruck arrived the Legate Holsteinius,—himself a convert from Lutheranism, and now a Canon of St. Peter's and Librarian of the Vatican,—a man of learning and culture, and one who could be relied upon to talk to Christina, not only of the beauty of holiness, but also of the beauty of the art treasures of the Catholic capital.

Under his agreeable auspices the solemn act of renunciation was performed. Attired in plain black silk, with a rich diamond cross blazing on her breast, Christina knelt at the altar and read, in a firm voice, the required repudiation of heretical opinions, recited the Nicene Creed, and declared her faith in the real presence, the doctrine of purgatory, the right of the Church to interpret the Scriptures, its power to remit sins and grant indulgences, and all the other articles of Catholic belief. It is not to be supposed that she had any more personal conviction of the truth of the particulars than a schoolboy has of the truth of the propositions appertaining to those higher mathematics which he has not yet begun to study; but she agreed that the Pope knew about them, and must not be contradicted. In order that she might not forget whether she did, or did not, believe this, that, or the other doctrinal item, a copy of her signed

declaration, witnessed by the municipal authorities, was left with her.

Then came the sermon, preached by a Jesuit on the appropriate text : " Hearken, O daughter, and consider, incline thine ear : Forget also thine own people and thy father's house." For once in her life, we may believe, Christina listened to a sermon instead of playing with the dogs ; and then began the demonstrations of joy over the sinner who had repented. The cannon roared ; the bonfires were lighted ; the best Italian artists performed a musical comedy. One feels, when one hears of it, much as one might feel if one heard that a bishop had concluded an Ordination Service with a Cinderella Dance ; though it appears that an officer of the Court apologised to the Legate, saying that, if longer notice of the ceremony had been given, a more appropriate entertainment would have been prepared.

Perhaps it is not true that Christina said, after the performance was over : " Gentlemen, it is most proper that you should entertain me with a comedy after I have entertained you with a farce." Leibnitz gravely remarks that the speech, if true, exhibited a regrettable lack of decorum ; and other biographers have repeated his comment with equal gravity and the expression of a sincere hope that the story is a fabrication ; but it seems just as reasonable to interpret it as the homage paid by humour to incongruity. One can imagine that, if a bishop

were to hurry the deacons off to Daly's or the Gaiety as soon as he had ordained them, an analogous criticism might rise unbidden to the lips of a moderately pious man.

But let that pass. Christina, in any case, had crossed the Rubicon; and she lost no time in writing to inform Charles Gustavus that she had done so—

"Sir and Brother,—I have arrived here in safety, and I have received the permission and orders of His Holiness to declare myself that which I long have been. It is a great happiness to me to obey him; and the glory of doing so is more to me than that of ruling over the dominions which are now yours. You ought to approve, seeing that, though you think my choice of a religion a bad one, it is very advantageous to you, and has in no way altered my affection for Sweden, or my sentiments of friendship for yourself."

She wrote other letters on the same subject, which we need not trouble to quote; and then, after a stay of only a week at Innsbruck, she set out for Italy, on December 8.

Once more her journey was like a conqueror's progress, and of a splendour which increased as she proceeded. The Pope sent a message begging her to travel slowly in order that she might not arrive before his arrangements for her worthy reception were complete; he also

sent his own coach to meet her. Wherever she arrived, she passed under triumphal arches, and saw cities illuminated in her honour. At Bologna there were fêtes and public games; at Ancona a representation of the seven hills of Rome, with a river of wine to represent the Tiber, and far more was thus made of Christina as a Queen in self-chosen exile than had ever been made of her as a Queen on a throne. Such pomp and flattery might well have turned the head of so young a woman; and all the evidence goes to show that she had not embraced religion with a humble and contrite heart, but with the settled purpose of making a sensational display.

A woman with a humble and contrite heart does not go to church to receive the grace of confirmation attended by a guard of honour, riding astride on a magnificently caparisoned horse, without a riding-habit, wearing riding-breeches, gorgeously embroidered with gold lace. Yet that was how Christina made her formal entry into Rome. It was in riding-breeches, thus embellished, and a richly feathered hat, that she knelt before the high altar at St. Peter's, and, after the Pope's hands had been laid upon her head, received the sacrament. One does not know whether it cost the Pope any effort to tell her, as he is said to have done, that there were (no doubt) even greater festivities in heaven than on earth at the spectacle of so magnificent an adhesion to the faith. He may have been dazzled, as men sometimes are, by

the unexpected, though inappropriate, glory of her apparel; or he may have had, like Christina herself, a sense of humour.

At all events, he invited her to a banquet, bidding her sit at his right hand, on a chair which was almost a throne, and had been made expressly for the occasion. A Jesuit preached during the repast; and as Christina made an apposite remark and asked an apposite question, we may take it that this was a second occasion on which she actually listened to a sermon instead of waiting impatiently for the benediction. After the discourse was over there was "a little music," albeit of a more decorous character than at Innsbruck; and the next days were given to sightseeing. Christina went to see churches, galleries, printing-presses. A few well-chosen words of flattery were printed in her presence in eight languages; and, at one of the colleges, verbal compliments were paid to her in twenty-two languages, including Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Chaldaic.

It was a promising beginning; and, for some weeks, everything was *couleur de rose*. The Cardinals vied with each other in showing their convert the sights, and the leaders of society competed in the provision of entertainments for her. The Barberini, for instance, organised an opera in her honour, at a cost of 40,000 crowns,—an opera in which horses, bulls, and elephants appeared upon the stage; and she herself realised her dream of forming a salon.

It met once a week at her lodging, for the reading of poetry and the discussion of moral problems, with a musical recitation to follow. "If only I could see you," she wrote to Ebba Sparre, "I should now be perfectly happy."

Yet that was not quite true,—or, at all events, did not remain true for very long; and there were various little rifts within the lute which had nothing to do with Christina's enforced separation from Ebba Sparre. The day came —and was not very long in coming—when the Roman nobility found the Queen's manner too haughty for their taste, and the Pope noticed things which compelled him to doubt whether his royal convert was quite such a credit to him as he had innocently expected her to be.

One need not make too much of the apparent haughtiness,—very likely it was only apparent, and only the result of the conflict between the manners and tone of northern and southern society. It was less true in those days than in ours that "good society is good society everywhere,"—the North was more sincere than ceremonious, and the South more ceremonious than sincere. But the Pope's case was good, even if the nobility's case was bad. He had expected a crowned saint, exhaling the odour of sanctity,—one who said long prayers, and did good works, and set a notable example. He found that he had taken to his bosom a crowned dilettante,—a woman singularly free of

speech, who laughed at those who sought to protect her modesty by draping nude statues, who jested and talked during divine service, and who, as a final impropriety, was turning the heads of the Cardinals.

The case of Cardinal Colonna was particularly shocking. It was the talk of Rome, not only that Cardinal Colonna was in love with Christina, but also that he was making himself ridiculous about her; and it is not clear whether Christina's offence was the less or the greater in the Pope's eyes because she laughed at the Cardinal. In any case, she did laugh at him when he powdered his hair in order to make himself more prepossessing, and appeared as a troubadour underneath her bedroom window, singing a serenade. Such tokens of esteem, however innocent in themselves, were obviously unbecoming in a prelate; and Alexander VII. naturally felt that he must act. He ordered the Cardinal to leave Rome; and he sent Christina a rosary with his compliments and a suggestion that she should tell her beads instead of disturbing public worship with frivolous conversation. Her reply—that she had not become a Catholic for the purpose of telling beads—was not of a nature to conciliate him.

Moreover, Christina was badly served,—the Archives are full of complaints of the extraordinary proceedings of the members of her suite and Court, preferred by the gentleman appointed to do the honours of the Farnese Palace in

which she was established. They tried to turn some of the apartments into a public gambling-hell. Finding a portion of the Palace inadequately warmed, they pulled doors off the hinges, to make a fire. They tore the gold lace off the draperies and hangings, and sold it; they also got rid of valuable silver candlesticks, and replaced them with candlesticks of silver-gilt; and they even pillaged Pimentelli's coach while he was calling on the Queen. Nor were menials the only offenders. It was found necessary to watch the gentlemen who accompanied the Queen when she went to inspect museums, for fear lest valuable medals should be extracted from their cases.

There was a further source of complications in the internal jealousies of the suite: a French faction being pitted against the Spanish faction. Christina had changed her religion under Spanish auspices; and now the Spaniards presumed to remonstrate with her for displaying friendship for their rivals. When she disregarded their remonstrances, some of them circulated calumnies about her; and then there was a row—one might reasonably call it a vulgar row—resulting in changes in the personnel of her household. The Pope himself was mixed up in the row; and Christina thought it necessary to tell him that, though she submitted to him in all matters of conscience, she considered herself the sole guardian of her own honour—a rejoinder which must have illuminated him

still further as to the kind of convert that he had made.

The principal Spaniard dismissed was the Grand Equerry, Antonio della Cueva; and he was not dismissed without a scene, of which Christina herself has written an excited account. He appears to have thrown the blame for the slanders which had been circulated upon his wife, and to have said that it was absurd to attach too much importance to a woman's gossip; but Christina was not to be appeased. She said that if della Cueva would like to return to Flanders, she would willingly give him permission to do so; he replied that he should like to start at once, and retired in dudgeon to the Spanish Embassy. Christina, by way of saving his face, sent him seven horses as a farewell gift. He accepted the gift but sulked, speaking of the donor as "the woman of the lightest reputation in the world"; while Christina, not to be outdone, wrote to the King of Spain to say that it was only out of regard for His Majesty's feelings that she had refrained from causing an officer bearing his commission to be thrown out of her presence by her lackeys, and beaten from the Palace with sticks. In his place, and in place of the other Spaniards who departed with him, she gave household appointments to three Italians: Monaldeschi, and the brothers Francesco and Ludovico Santinelli,—all of whom we shall meet again.

Altogether, therefore, Christina's experiences

at Rome were, after the first glow of excitement had subsided, disappointing. There were quarters in which, instead of homage, she received the cold shoulder; there were leaders of society who even went so far as to "cut" her. At one of her receptions, to which she had invited forty guests, no single guest turned up. She still had some good friends among the Cardinals. Notably she had formed a warm friendship for Cardinal Azzolino—another whom we shall meet again. But Roman Society as a whole was lacking in cordiality; and there was yet another cause of annoyance: the expected supplies did not arrive from Sweden with a regularity commensurate with Christina's extravagant expenditure. The desire grew upon her to rake money together and depart on a fresh journey.

A commissioner sent to Sweden to see about the money was only partially successful. It was no part, indeed, of Charles Gustavus's programme to dock Christina's allowance because she had gone over to Rome. Strict Lutheran though he was, he did not regard short commons as the right remedy for false doctrine. But he was at war with Poland, and needed all his ready money for military expenses; consequently he could not entertain the idea of paying a lump sum down in commutation of the allowance, but could only promise to do his best, and make a small payment on account. It occurred to Christina

that, if she went to Sweden herself, she might get better terms,—especially if she went there by way of France. Sweden was claiming moneys from France,—arrears of subsidies due for services rendered during the Thirty Years War; and Christina maintained that, as she had been Queen of Sweden when the undertaking was entered into, she could take the money and give a valid discharge therefor. At all events, she proposed to see Cardinal Mazarin and try; so she set off,—the date of her departure being hurried by an outbreak of the plague in Rome.

The lack of pence was still an obstacle; but she surmounted it by selling her horses and carriages and pawning a number of her jewels. Some of them were left, as security for loans, with noblemen and Cardinals; others were deposited in the Mont de Piété. The Pope, too, sent her a parting gift of 10,000 crowns —perhaps in order to make sure of her going— and lent her four galleys for the sea voyage. These sufficed for her diminished suite, now reduced to about sixty persons, but including Monaldeschi, the two Santinellis, that Father Malines who had assisted in her conversion, Count Annibale Thiene, Captain Francesco Landini, and a converted Swede named Davisson, whom she had engaged as her secretary. Thus attended, she embarked on July 19, 1656, and reached Marseilles on August 29.

The departure was a sad one. Both Christina

and the Pope had lost some of their illusions; and if Alexander VII. submitted to the loss of his illusions with Christian resignation, Christina wept over the loss of hers. It was observed, too, that she continually bent sorrowful eyes over a miniature portrait which she carried with her. She showed it to no one; but it was understood that it was Cardinal Azzolino's portrait, and that Christina had left her heart at Rome in his custody.

Perhaps she had; for Azzolino was a Cardinal whom rumour credited with great good fortune in gallantry. But there is no need to anticipate. Azzolino's place in this narrative is not yet.

CHAPTER XV

Christina in France—Her interview with Mlle de Montpensier —Her reception in Paris—Her meeting with Mazarin, Anne of Austria, and Louis XIV., at Compiègne—Her attempt to induce Mazarin to make her Queen of Naples —Her return across the Mont Cenis to Italy

Most of the biographers have treated Christina's first journey to France as the caprice of a restless woman; but Christina had a plan,—though one does not quite know how seriously to take it.

She wanted money, as we have seen; but she also wanted something else as well. Why, it occurred to her to ask, should she not become Queen of Naples? Why should not Cardinal Mazarin make her Queen of Naples? The Spaniards were in possession of that kingdom; but why should not Cardinal Mazarin turn them out? It would not be difficult,—the Duke of Modena might be induced to help.

All the details of the intrigue (if intrigue be the word for it) may be found in M. de Bildt's *Christine de Suède et le Cardinal Azzolino.* Most likely he is right in attributing the scheme to Christina's nerves; and one can trace the steps by which it may have been improvised in an excited brain. Her need for money would be met if she could arrange to tap the pockets of

the Neapolitan tax-payers. People had been rude to her—or had accused her of being rude to them—since her retirement from the throne; and, if she found a fresh kingdom, she would be in a position to snub them. Her Spanish retainers, in particular, had been rude,—Pimentelli had ceased to call on account of her treatment of her Spanish household; and she owed both him and Spain a bad turn in consequence. One can picture her thinking the matter out as she travelled; the thoughts may even have occupied her while she was eating the "five hundred crowns' worth of sweetmeats" which are said to have been presented to her in the midst of her journey by the ruling authorities of the Genoese Republic.

It sounds a wild project, perhaps, when thus expounded; but it was not quite so ridiculously fantastic as it seems,—Christina, even when angry, was too clever to be quite unpractical. Mazarin, at least, was willing to consider the proposal, and play with it, using Christina's ambition as a card to be kept up his sleeve in case there should be trouble with Spain. There were negotiations between them on the subject, more or less serious; though his account of those negotiations differs from hers. She writes of a treaty which she "made" with him; he only speaks of a treaty which she "proposed"; and one can only reconcile the contradictory statements by assuming that his notions of a treaty were more precise than hers. The

intrigue, at any rate, excited her agreeably for several months; though, in the end, she got tired of it, apparently because she wanted to be back at Rome with Azzolino.

Meanwhile her progress through France, in spite of the dwindling of her retinue, was hardly less magnificent than her previous progress through Italy. The Duc de Guise was sent to receive her; and whenever she approached a town, the magistrates came out to welcome her, and a competent orator delivered an address. One of the orators stopped the cavalcade for the purpose of delivering a sermon upon the Wrath to Come, supposing that a convert to the faith would be better pleased with a serious exhortation than with commonplace compliments; but Christina made cutting remarks which convinced him of his mistake, describing his style as "lugubrious," and refusing him a private audience.

Her route was through Aix, Montélimar, Avignon, Lyon, Macon, Dijon, Auxerre, and Fontainebleau, where Mademoiselle de Montpensier—La Grande Mademoiselle—came to see her, and got on reasonably well with her. She found Christina's manner and appearance odd, but did not "die of laughing" as she had expected to do. The principal impression which she got was that of "a pretty boy," with a pale face, blue eyes, a nose of aquiline aggressiveness, and a masculine habit of sprawling in chairs, and throwing her legs about over their arms

and backs, with imperfect regard for decorum,—"assuming postures," Mademoiselle writes, "which were scarcely decent." But her conversation was remarkable in manner as well as matter—

"She talked on many subjects; and whatever she had to say, she expressed herself agreeably. Sometimes she fell into profound reveries, and heaved deep sighs. Then she recovered, like a person awaking with a start from a dream. In fact, she was the most extraordinary person. . . . She offered to patch up my quarrel with the Court and with His Royal Highness. She said she would like to see me Queen of France."

Then there was a display of fireworks. Mademoiselle de Montpensier was frightened, and Christina laughed at her fears; and the two ladies compared notes as to their courage. Mademoiselle said that she could only be brave on critical occasions,—Christina that it was the dream of her life to see a battle; but we shall see, in a moment, that Christina was not quite so brave as she imagined herself to be. A further incident of the stay at Fontainebleau was that French ladies greeted Christina with kisses, drawing forth a satirical remonstrance—

"Why on earth are all these women so anxious to kiss me? I suppose it is because I look like a man."

And so to Paris, where Christina was once more to taste the pleasure of creating a great public sensation; and thence to Compiègne, where she was to test her skill in the devious paths of diplomacy.

Her advent, of course, appealed to the Parisian passion for looking upon "some new thing"; and both she and they did justice to the great spectacular occasion. Two hundred thousand sightseers are said to have lined the streets when she entered the City. She was apparelled from head to foot in scarlet, and had black plumes in her hat. She rode astride on a magnificent white horse, richly caparisoned with gold and silver,—a cane in her hand, and pistols slung from the saddle-bow; and more than a thousand horsemen formed her escort. The bourgeoisie of Paris, to the number of fifteen thousand, were under arms to receive her. The Governor of Paris and the Provost of the Merchants met her at the City Gate, dismounting when she came; and the Governor began a speech which the cheers of the populace drowned. He contented himself with pointing to the demonstrators, and begging that the distinguished guest would accept their shouts as sufficient token of the enthusiasm with which Paris bade her welcome.

Then the procession of honour was formed: the archers leading, followed by the Governor's Guards, the City Guards, the representatives of the Guilds, the dignitaries of the Church and the

University, and countless other honourable and ornamental functionaries,—the Duc de Guise riding at Christina's side. They conducted her to Notre Dame, where the Dean and Chapter welcomed her, and a *Te Deum* was sung in her honour; they conducted her thence to the Louvre Palace, where an apartment had been prepared for her, with the Maréchale de l'Hôpital and many other ladies of distinction to do the honours; and, on the very same evening, she received a deputation from the University, with the Rector for the spokesman of their compliments.

The next day came a deputation of the clergy, with a bishop to present their compliments, and a deputation of lawyers in red robes, presenting their compliments through the mouth of the President of the Paris Parlement, and the Academicians, on whose behalf Patru pronounced the most flowery of all the eulogies—

"The knowledge of languages, to which we devote our days and nights throughout the best years of our life, was merely the recreation of your nursery. The Humane Letters have no fruit or flower which your royal hands have not plucked. There is no secret of science which your keen intelligence has not penetrated. You have done what very few men have been able to do, and what no woman has ever before ventured to attempt to do. And all that, Madam, on the threshold of life, amid the pomps of a Court, and

the hindrances of a royal station. We search history in vain, to find a parallel. . . . Your image, when we are deprived of your presence, will be the most precious object of our contemplation : to it we shall pay our homage, and make our sacrifices. It will reign for ever in our assemblies,—preside for ever over our meetings."

And so on for several pages ; and then there followed visits from the representatives of the Guilds, from the Papal Nuncio, from the Corps Diplomatique, and from Charles I.'s widowed Queen, Henrietta Maria, together with her daughter Mary, Princess of Orange, who told her a tale of poverty so acute that they had sometimes been obliged, in winter, to sit in a room without a fire; and then there came Ménage, wit and man of letters, whose privilege it was to introduce other wits and men of letters and interesting people generally whom he thought that Christina would like to know.

Christina and he had already met on paper. Alluding to their respective "days," she had written to him that her Wednesdays sent their kind regards to his Thursdays ; and she had also invited him, though he had not accepted the invitation, to " meet her half-way " at Brussels. Now he figured as the Master of the Ceremonies at her literary receptions; and his mechanical endeavour to do full justice to the merits of those whom he presented elicited a spark of her sardonic humour. " M. So-and-so, a gentleman of

distinction," was the formula which he repeated again and again, until, at last, Christina flashed out with: "Really, really, really! What a number of gentlemen of distinction this M. Ménage knows!"

Presently, however, Christina and her guests fell to talking literature; and on that branch of the subject also, Ménage has preserved a characteristic anecdote—

"M. Gilbert, the Queen's Resident in France" (he tells us), "had written a comedy, some of the lines of which were just a little . . . He read it in Queen Christina's presence, at the house of the Duc de Guise; and she enjoyed it immensely. The first person whose opinion about the piece was asked was M. Chapelain. He said what he thought, as indulgently as he could, but nevertheless let it be seen that he was not blind to the impropriety of certain passages. Then the Queen asked me what I thought. I replied, like a good courtier, that I considered it one of the best comedies that had ever been written. Her Majesty was delighted with my criticism. 'I am glad you like it,' she said. 'One can trust your judgment. As for poor M. Chapelain,—how limited his taste! *Il voudrait que tout fût pucelle!*'"

The story is a fitting pendant to that of the reading given by Ebba Sparre in Saumaise's sick-room. It shows us, yet again, that Christina was

not easily put out of countenance; and we find a confirmatory illustration of this characteristic in the reports of her behaviour at Notre Dame. Just as she had engaged Cardinals in conversation during divine service at Rome, so she engaged Bishops in conversation during the celebration of Mass in Paris; and her manner of confessing was not what the devout could regard as edifying. She refused to confess to any ecclesiastic of less degree than a Bishop; and when the Bishop of Amiens was hurriedly fetched to hear her confession, she stared him in the face, instead of drooping her eyes, throughout the whole recital of her sins. It was the opinion of Mlle de Montpensier, from whose *Memoirs* the story is taken, that a really humble and contrite heart would have found expression in a more contrite and humble demeanour.

And would a penitent with a really humble and contrite heart have insisted on paying a visit to Ninon de Lenclos,—"a young lady called Ninon," as the prim Mme de Motteville puts it, "celebrated for her vices, her loose life, and her wit?" One cannot say; but Mme de Motteville was not the only Frenchwoman who was shocked when Christina did so. There were those who complained that Ninon seemed to be the only Frenchwoman in whom Christina took any interest; and there are biographers who believe that Ninon owed to Christina's intercession in high places her release from the Convent in which she had been shut up to repent of her frivolities. Nothing

authentic is preserved of the conversation, however, except Ninon's *mot*: that the Précieuses Ridicules were "the Jansenists of love."

Even those, however, who criticised her choice of friends admitted that Christina "conquered all hearts" at Paris. She seemed to know everything that it was necessary for her to know in order to be liked. When a nobleman was presented to her, he always found her familiar with his family history, and acquainted with his armorial bearings, his exploits in gallantry, and his literary and artistic tastes. She knew what pictures were in private collections better than did the collectors; she knew more about the contents of the public collections than did the curators,—actually making and winning a wager that a certain precious jewel would be found in the Sainte-Chapelle at Saint-Denis. And, with all that, she "made herself very agreeable,—especially with men." Young Louis XIV. and his brother were so excited by the reports which reached their ears that they came privately to see her, causing themselves to be presented as vague "noblemen of distinction"; but she divined their identity, and they acknowledged it. "The young King," says Mme de Motteville, "got on very well with the haughty, learned, and audacious lady; and they conversed with one another freely and with mutual satisfaction." And so to Compiègne, to meet Anne of Austria and talk business!

The business, as has already been noted,

came to no satisfactory conclusion. On the one hand, it was useless for Christina to proceed to Sweden to negotiate with Charles Gustavus, because Charles Gustavus had gone to the wars; on the other hand, Cardinal Mazarin did not see his way to make her a definite promise of the throne of Naples. He toyed with the idea,—he held out hopes,—he threw out hints, and allowed his meaning to be misunderstood; but he delayed action, intimating that the Pope would have to be consulted. Nor could he be induced to hand to Christina the 900,000 crowns which he owed to Sweden. He would make a small payment on account,—perhaps,—presently, —but not immediately. In the meantime she had better go back to Italy, while plans matured.

Politically, therefore, the journey to France was a failure; but it was a whim rather than an ambition which was thus defeated. Socially the expedition was a success: the supreme social triumph of Christina's life,—not even to be accounted an anti-climax after the glory of the reception at Rome. Anne of Austria herself yielded her precedence at the ceremonial banquet, though there were those who considered that concession to audacity improper. The triumph was the greater because she arrived practically without a retinue, and had to borrow even a maid to help her to change her dress, and looked, according to Mme de Motteville, like "a dissolute gipsy who did not happen to be quite so dark in complexion as one would have expected her."

Her manners, too, it must be admitted, were not the manners to which the French Court was accustomed. She manifested her varying emotions by heaving sighs, lapsing into day-dreams, and bursting into snatches of song. Her conversation ranged freely over topics "concerning which reticence is more proper to her sex"; and even that was not the worst—

"She took the name of God in vain; and allowed herself no less licence in her actions than in her thoughts and speech. She could not sit still; and, in the presence of the King, the Queen, and the entire Court, she threw up her legs on to chairs as high as the one on which she was sitting, making them much too conspicuous to the view."

It was a strain upon French politeness, but not a stronger strain than French politeness could stand; though Christina added to her other offences an unkind criticism of a dramatic entertainment organised for her diversion by a troupe of Jesuits, saying that Jesuits were as unfit to be actors as they were to be confessors. The Gaul was disposed to make allowances for the Goth; and Christina, on the whole, meant well. She proved it by complimenting Anne of Austria on the beauty of her hands; and she wrote to her friend Azzolino to say that she did not believe a word of the shocking scandals whispered concerning the Queen's intimacy with Cardinal Mazarin.

She made the mistake, however, of meddling with a matter which was no concern of hers. Those were the days when Louis XIV. was sighing at the feet of Mazarin's niece, Marie de Mancini; and Christina seems to have seen, or heard, him sigh. Her letter to Azzolino contains many comments on the situation. The King, she thinks, is shy,—the sort of boy to die of love without even daring to touch the tip of the lady's finger; the lady, on the other hand, is "a past mistress of all the arts of Roman coquettes." But Mazarin is too wise a man to let her marry her sovereign—

"He knows very well that marriage is the sovereign remedy for love, and that the nuptial bed is generally its tomb. I don't think, therefore, that he will put his fortune to so dangerous a test, for that might suffice to ruin him. . . . It is only calf-love,—there is no genuine passion in it. Of passion I believe him to be incapable. To marry him would be to make him hate those who had taken advantage of his impressionable youth; and you can imagine how such a revulsion in his feelings might bring about Mazarin's disgrace. But Mazarin, I fancy, is too clever to take such a risk."

It was a discreet view of the matter; but it was an afterthought. Christina's behaviour at the moment was not so discreet,—the whim seized her to adopt the rôle of matchmaker.

"You should marry for love," she is said to have whispered to the King. "Marry,—I should enjoy being your confidante," she is said to have whispered to the happy pair when she surprised them in a flirtation. It was very amiable of her, even if it was not entirely disinterested. Most likely the desire to see the course of true love running smoothly was mingled with the desire to do Mazarin a good turn, and lay him under an obligation. But, as Mlle de Montpensier remarks: "People who enter into such delicate discussions without being invited to do so are not popular at Court"; and she adds that both the Queen and the Cardinal were displeased, and that the *inconvenance* expedited Christina's departure.

In any case her departure was expedited. The festivities were of unprecedented brilliancy —the French Court knew how to do things in style—but they soon came to an end. The retreat, if we may trust Mlle de Montpensier, was without magnificence—

"The Swedish Amazon went off in hired carriages provided by the King, who also provided money with which to pay the post-boys. Only her own miserable retinue followed her. There was no splendour; she had neither a bed, nor silver plate, nor any other indication of her royal rank."

It certainly does look as if, at the last, there

had been some little contretemps; but Christina was nevertheless fully persuaded in her own mind that she had a "treaty" with Mazarin, and that the kingdom of Naples would presently be hers, if she played her part properly in certain supplementary negotiations.

And so back, over the Mont Cenis Pass, to Italy!

CHAPTER XVI

The sojourn in Italy—The return to France—Christina at Fontainebleau—The tragic death of Monaldeschi—Was it a murder or an execution?—Was it a *crime passionel*?—Comments on the incident by Gui Patin—By Mme de Motteville—By Mlle de Montpensier—Treason, terror, and nerves

THE sojourn in Italy was to be brief: Christina crossed the frontier in October 1656 and recrossed it in July 1657. Her correspondence shows her mind divided between the desire to see Azzolino again and the desire to arrange for the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples. She could not go to Rome immediately, however, because the plague was raging there—an epidemic concerning which Gui Patin irreverently remarks that it spared the Pope and the Cardinals, who could easily have been replaced, but killed the doctors, who could not. After a short stay at Turin, therefore, she settled at Pesaro, where the organisation of a miniature Court gave her a transitory illusion of splendour. "Better," said one of her advisers, "to lack bread than to lack a retinue"; so she engaged, not only gentlemen-in-waiting and ladies-in-waiting, but also Swiss guards and pages.

Azzolino had news of her, not only from her own letters, but also from those of the Vice-Legate Lascaris, whom he had commissioned to keep a watchful eye on her, and exhort her to live economically. It is from one of these letters that we get our most vivid glimpse at her—

"Her Majesty" (Lascaris writes) "is more beautiful and more pious than ever. Yesterday she wore black velvet trimmed with blue ribbons, with a man's collar,—very handsome. It was a spectacle to turn one's head, especially when, picking up a French comedy which was lying on the table, she began to read it to me by candlelight. The part which she read was that of Diana in love with Endymion; and she read it so well that I was several times on the point of saying——"

What the Vice-Legate was on the point of saying involves a play upon Italian words which cannot be translated; but the gist of the remark was that the pious Queen's passionate rendering of the love scenes imposed a severe strain upon a churchman's self-command.

Neither these proofs of piety, however, nor the laying of the foundation stones of convents, nor the organisation of balls, picnics, and amateur theatricals, made up the whole of life for Christina. She was also anxious to raise money for the pursuit of her ambitious schemes; and she continued to negotiate with Mazarin on

those allied branches of a single subject. If the desire for the throne of Naples was a passing whim, the need of money was a perpetual preoccupation. She not only wrote to Mazarin on these matters, but also sent, first Monaldeschi, and then Santinelli, to Paris to see him about them; and she was distressed to find his responses unsatisfactory and vague.

The kingdom? Yes, Mazarin had not forgotten about the kingdom,—he would see about the kingdom presently; but the time was inopportune,—Christina must be patient a little longer. The money? Yes, Mazarin could quite understand that Christina wanted money,—she should have some. But the 900,000 crowns which she asked for was a great deal of money,—far too much to be extracted from the Treasury on the spur of the moment. Perhaps not all of it was due,—in any case, a payment on account must suffice. Not the 300,000 crowns which Christina pressed for,—not the 100,000 crowns which she was willing to take,—but merely the ridiculous sum, as it seemed to her, of 15,000 crowns. It is not surprising that Christina, tiring of negotiations which produced such infinitesimal results, decided to return to Paris and conduct her case in person.

She made a frivolous excuse,—that she was curious to see Louis XIV. dance in a ballet, as it was his pleasant practice to do in those days of his youth; and general opinion in France

attributed the journey to a caprice at least as idle. She was coming to Paris, Gui Patin wrote, because Paris was the "refuge of all wanderers." "Her pretended conversion," he added, "serves her as an excuse and a pretext for playing the pilgrim and carecring about all over the world." He also suspected—it might be hard to say why—that the Jesuits were at the bottom of the business. But what Christina really wanted was an exciting adventure and the wherewithal to pay for it.

Mazarin knew that, did not want her, and dispatched many messengers, armed with broad hints, to stop her. He looked forward to seeing her later,—at a more convenient time, when he could entertain her more worthily. Meanwhile, would she mind arresting her progress at Avignon—at Lyon—at Nevers? In this way he made her journey a kind of obstacle race; but she cleared the obstacles with spirit, bursting through the broad hints as a circus rider bursts through a tinsel-covered hoop. It became necessary, if open rudeness was to be avoided, once more to place the Palace of Fontainebleau at her disposal until such time as the French Court should be ready to receive her.

She settled down at Fontainebleau, and made herself at home there. Old account books, preserved in the Azzolino archives, show that she was principally occupied in attending to the details of her wardrobe and that of her

attendants. She bought uniforms for her guards, liveries for her serving men, new dresses, new boots, and new gloves for her ladies and herself, —all this apparently in preparation for the triumphant march to Naples. But it is not for these purchases that the second sojourn at Fontainebleau is famous. The event which made it memorable for ever was the tragic death of Monaldeschi, which horrified, first Paris, then France, and then all Christendom—

"Just as the King was about to start for Fontainebleau to see the Queen of Sweden, he received news which prevented him from doing so; news to the effect that she had caused her first equerry, who was an Italian, to be put to death by another Italian, on account of certain rascalities and deceptions practised on her, and on account of certain forged letters which the equerry had shown her, and which caused her the greater offence because even her honour was compromised in them. Such are the diversions of princes. The name of the assassin is Santinelli, and the name of the man assassinated is Monaldeschi. As soon as he was dead, she had the wretched man's body conveyed to the Mathurin convent, where it was buried. They say that she was herself in the gallery, close to the apartment in which the assassination took place. It is a very tragic affair; it also gives one the impression of being a very black and scoundrelly affair. The poor fellow

evidently had some suspicion of what was about to happen, for he was wearing a coat of mail, which made it very difficult to dispatch him. The Queen of Sweden, told of this, replied that they had better cut his throat, which they duly did. I hear that she has written to the King, saying that this is the proper way to treat officers who betray their sovereigns, or are lacking in respect and loyalty towards them. Nevertheless, every one whom I meet puts an unfavourable construction on the proceeding, and considers it an act of evil omen."

That was the first version of the story, given forth in one of Gui Patin's letters. It is not quite clear whether, in what he says about Christina's "honour," he means to hint at a *crime passionel*; but public opinion instinctively took that view of the matter. Monaldeschi was untrue, and Christina was jealous: that was the doctrine promptly expounded, after the custom of the time, in a Latin epigram—

> "Dum regina ferox insanum cædit amantem,
> Et cadit ante suos victima mæsta pedes,
> Amborum miseram flebit gens postera sortem:
> Perdidit hic vitam, perdidit illa decus."

Which is to say that, when the lover fell at the feet of the ferocious Queen, she forfeited her fair fame as surely as he lost his life.

A natural supposition—which furnished the elder Dumas with the motive of a famous tragedy—but not, it would seem, a well-founded one.

Whether murder or execution be the proper word for the putting to death of Monaldeschi, love had nothing to do with either his favour or his fate. The letters which Lascaris wrote to Azzolino from Pesaro make that as certain as anything can be. The Vice-Legate dealt freely in scandal when he could; but he had nothing scandalous to report about Christina's affection for her equerries. On the contrary—

"The Queen" (he wrote) "loves no one in this world. She only loves her whims and caprices, and she lacks the power to execute them."

Meaning, merely, it would appear, that she was anxious to go to Rome, but could not.

Nor can the *crime passionel* theory be supported from the comments of either Mme de Motteville or Mlle de Montpensier. For Mme de Motteville, Christina's victim was merely "a man who had offended her"; and she was chiefly moved by the cruelty, the scandal, and, above all, the bad taste of the proceeding—

"After her abominably cruel action" (she writes indignantly) "she sat chatting quietly in her room, as if nothing in particular had happened. The Very Christian Queen-Mother,[1] who had had so many enemies, and had overwhelmed them with marks of kindness instead

[1] Anne of Austria.

of the punishment which they deserved, was inexpressibly shocked. The King and his brother blamed the proceeding; and the Minister,[1] who had no cruelty in his composition, was amazed at it. In fact, the entire Court was horrified by the ugly act of vengeance; and those who had praised the Queen were ashamed of their eulogies, though they did not fail to ridicule her unhappy victim for neglecting to defend himself. At least he should have carried a dagger and should have used it."

While Mlle de Montpensier, who presently had a second interview with Christina at Fontainebleau, and concluded that she did not like her, comments as follows—

"The Queen had told Monaldeschi her grounds of complaint against him, and given him to understand that it was all one to her whether she had him beheaded in Sweden or executed in the Fontainebleau gallery. Santinelli had some difficulty in killing him, as he was wearing a coat of mail. He had to strike several times, with the result that the gallery ran with blood, and the stains can still be seen in spite of frequent attempts to wash them out. The general view taken of the proceeding was very unfavourable, and strong remarks were passed on her audacity in committing it in the King's Palace. Her claim

[1] Mazarin.

Mlle de Montpensier

was that she was doing justice, and that a sovereign's power of life and death over his subjects remained with the sovereign wherever he might be. This kind of death, however, is very cruel for any one—and especially for a woman—to inflict."

That was how contemporaries talked over their nine days' wonder. Their knowledge of the details was derived from rumour; and they had no knowledge of the motives, but could only guess at them. The modern historian has better clues than they had. He has the account of an eye-witness, and Christina's own vindication of her act. In the light of these documents, he can reduce the mystery to a minimum and determine, in general though not in particular, the "why" as well as the "how."

Monaldeschi's crime was treason, and the motive of Christina's cruelty was fear. She was not naturally cruel; but her nerves—those nerves on which we have had to remark so often—got the better of her, and scared her into brutal violence. That is the matter in a nutshell: the details shall be given in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVII

Monaldeschi's alleged treason—Impossibility of discovering the particulars—Details of the execution—Done to death in the Galerie des Cerfs—Attitude of the French Court—Christina's refusal to leave France in disgrace

THE details of old treasons are generally unconvincing; the details of Monaldeschi's treason are tangled and obscure. One knows that he confessed; but one does not know what he confessed. One knows that he forged letters; but one does not know what was in the letters. One knows that he tried to throw the blame for his own misconduct on Francesco Santinelli; but the precise nature of that misconduct is wrapped in mystery, as are also the precise grounds of Santinelli's quarrel with him. All that is clear is that neither of the two men merits much sympathy, and that the proceedings of both of them were tortuous.

If Monaldeschi was a traitor, Santinelli was unquestionably a thief. Christina had sent him to Rome, to take her jewels out of pawn, and make arrangements for her next stay there. After redeeming the jewels, he had re-engaged them, and pocketed the proceeds; and he had also made an illegitimate profit by charging for

expenses which he had not incurred. Perhaps—but this is not quite certain—he had also commented offensively on Christina's relations with Cardinal Azzolino. Monaldeschi, at any rate, had heard enough to be able to make out a good case against him. He tried to make out too good a case by forging Santinelli's handwriting, and offering the letters as proofs that Santinelli was a "traitor."

There certainly was nothing to betray which is of the least importance to the modern student of history; but it does not follow that there was nothing to betray which was of importance to Christina at the time. To us her designs on the Kingdom of Naples seem merely fantastic. They could come to nothing without the co-operation of Mazarin, who evidently did not mean to co-operate; but that, naturally, was not Christina's view of the matter. She believed that Spain was afraid of her; and she knew that she was afraid of Spain. She may even have had reason to be afraid of Spain in the days of the dagger and the poisoned cup; and her whole behaviour, both before the tragic incident and afterwards, is that of a woman spurred to cruelty by panic.

What first led her to suspect Monaldeschi is uncertain. In any case, "information received" induced her to intercept and open his letters; and their contents seemed to her to furnish full proofs of his perfidy. The nature of that perfidy is not disclosed in her own account

of the incident; and no one outside her immediate circle—perhaps no one but herself and her victim—ever knew what it was. She spoke to Monaldeschi on the subject, however, telling him that she had discovered treachery, but allowing him to suppose that she believed Santinelli to be the traitor. The following dialogue is reported, in Christina's version of the story, to have passed between them :—

"It is quite clear, madam, that Your Majesty has been betrayed; and the traitor must be either the absentee known to Your Majesty and me, or else it must be myself. The treachery can emanate from no third quarter. Your Majesty will soon know which of us is guilty; and I trust that Your Majesty will not pardon the offender."

"What punishment do you consider to be due to a man who betrays me in that style?"

"Your Majesty should show him no mercy, but should instantly put him to death. I am quite prepared to be either executioner or victim; it is an act of justice."

"Very well! Remember what you have said. I promise you, for my part, that I will not forgive him."

Which may or may not be true; for the dramatic propriety of the dialogue provokes suspicion. But Christina, at any rate, laid her plans as secretly as Monaldeschi had laid his. If he feared that evil would befall him, the appre-

hension was due to the qualms of conscience, and not to any threat or warning. His fate took him none the less by surprise because it found him in a coat of mail. He feared, presumably, that he might be struck down by the stealthy dagger of a hired assassin—hired, it might be, by his enemy Santinelli; assuredly he did not expect that he would be done to death by open violence.

That, nevertheless, was to be his fate; and it was imminent. An eye-witness—one Father le Bel—has pictured the scene for us. He spares us no barbarous detail; and there is no reason to doubt the essential truth of his narrative.

Father le Bel begins by telling us how he, the Prior of the Community of the Maturins at Fontainebleau, was fetched by a Groom of the Chambers to a private interview with Christina in the Galerie des Cerfs. She asked whether she could depend upon him to respect her confidence, and he promised to do so, saying that, in all confidential matters, he was as one blind and dumb. Then she gave him a paper packet sealed in three places, but bearing no address, saying that, when she asked for it again, he was to give it her, in the presence of such witnesses as she chose to summon. The parcel contained, of course, the incriminating letters,—the *pièces de conviction*: the stage was being set for the great scene of confrontation. The curtain was rung up on that scene at one o'clock on the following Saturday afternoon.

At that hour, the Prior received the summons which he was awaiting, and once more attended Christina in the Galerie des Cerfs. He entered; and the Groom of the Chambers slammed the door behind him with an alarming violence. He advanced nervously towards Christina, whom he perceived, at the further end of the apartment, conversing with Monaldeschi, while other members of her Court stood by,—one of them close to her, and the others a few paces behind. She called in a loud voice: "Give me the packet, father. I want to read it." He gave it to her, and remained, with no inkling of what was about to happen,—the reluctant witness of a disturbance which was no concern of his. And then came the confrontation which had been arranged, and the tragedy in which the Prior, however reluctantly, had to play a part.

The seals were broken; the package was opened. Monaldeschi was shown the letters contained in it, and was asked for explanations. He stammered unconvincing and confused excuses; but he had to admit that the handwriting was his. "Oh, the traitor!" cried the Queen; and he threw himself at her feet, imploring her forgiveness, while the other members of the suite drew their swords. But the climax was not quite yet. Christina, to all appearance, was playing with her victim like a cat with a mouse. The probability is that she was as much afraid of him as he of her,—and also afraid of herself, and afraid of her own fears,—and that it was her fears which

gradually screwed her courage to the sticking-point. At all events, she did not refuse to listen to Monaldeschi's entreaties, but conversed with him, according to the Prior, " with great patience and moderation, without giving any sign that she was displeased by his importunity." The conversation lasted for more than an hour ; and the Prior doubtless expected it to end with a reprimand and a pardon.

But not so. Two speeches which Christina addressed to the Prior showed how, after fluctuating, she had come to her determination—

" Observe, father ! You are my witness that I am making no undue haste, but am giving this traitor more time than he has the right to ask for from a person whom he has wronged, to justify himself, if he can do so."

And then, after a further interval, gravely, and in measured tones—

" Father, I now leave this man in your hands. Comfort his soul, and make him ready for death."

Not until then did the Prior realise the drama, and the part in it which had been assigned to him. So far, the matter had been no business of his ; but now the claims of humanity made it so. Startled at last into action, he threw himself at Christina's feet, and implored her to be merciful. She refused,

giving her reasons, — at great length, but vaguely. The traitor was "a worse criminal than those who are condemned to be broken on the wheel"—she had trusted him, and he had betrayed her trust,—his own conscience should be his executioner, etc.; and when she had finished, she swept out of the room.

The three executioners stood with drawn swords, ready, and yet a little reluctant, to begin their work. Monaldeschi, quite unmanned, now knelt to them, as he had before knelt to Christina. One of them was moved to the point of following Christina and interceding for him; but the message which he brought back was: "No, Marquis, you are to die. Think of God and of your soul!" Then Father le Bel, in his turn, was besought to go on the same errand—

"He did so, and found the Queen in her apartment, with a serene and unmoved countenance. He threw himself at her feet, and with tears streaming from his eyes and a voice shaken with sobs, and implored her, by the wounds and passion of the Saviour, to have pity on the Marquis. She assured him that she was very sorry she could not grant his request, and spoke to him of the blackness of the miserable wretch's perfidy, and of the cruelty of his intentions towards herself, adding that he must not look for pity or pardon, and that many who had been broken on the wheel deserved their fate less than he did."

Supplication having failed, the Prior fell back upon argument, appealing first to expediency, and then to magnanimity. The Queen was not in her own Palace,—the King whose hospitality she enjoyed might not approve. Though she was doing an act of justice, yet surely she should do it in accordance with the forms of law. Let her lodge a complaint,—her host would not grudge her satisfaction, and her reputation would not be sullied by the strictures of the ill-informed. So he reasoned; but Christina had an answer ready for every argument. She was not a prisoner or an exile in France, she said,—she was a sovereign ruler, supreme over her own subjects, and had no need to ask any man's leave to do justice,—least of all when she held the proofs of a traitor's guilt in her hand. So her last words were—

"No, no, my father. I shall tell the King all about it. Go back to the man, and see to his soul. My conscience will not let me do what you ask."

She was thoroughly frightened; convinced that, if she did not kill Monaldeschi, Monaldeschi would kill her. That was how the Prior judged her; and there can be little doubt that he judged her rightly, though it was impossible for him, and is equally impossible for us, to say whether her fear was well-founded. The Prior, at any rate, felt that he could do no more beyond

discharging the duties which his cloth imposed. He was, as it were, the prison chaplain, commissioned against his will, *ad hoc*, for the shriving of this particular prisoner. He returned, therefore, with the report that there was no hope, and bade Monaldeschi confess his sins. The confession was made, — punctuated with agonising shrieks of terror.

The Queen's Almoner entered the Gallery; and to him also Monaldeschi addressed his piteous appeal. There was a conference between them; but the chief executioner cut it short, saying: "Marquis, ask God's forgiveness. Your death cannot be delayed any longer. Have you finished your confession?" And he pushed him, without waiting for an answer, against the Gallery wall, and stabbed at his stomach. Monaldeschi caught at the sword with his hand, and cut his fingers. Then he was slashed in the face; and then he called to the Prior, and was accorded a few moments' respite, during which he professed penitence, and received absolution,— the Confessor exhorting him to remember God, and resign himself to bear the punishment for his sins. And then the executioners went in and finished their work, which was a slow business, because of the coat of mail; and then—

"The Queen, having been assured that the Marquis was really dead, expressed her regret at having been obliged to execute him, but

said that justice required her to punish him for his crime and his treason, and that she prayed God to forgive him. She told the Confessor to take him away carefully and bury him, and added that she wished several masses said for his soul. . . . She sent one hundred livres by two of her men to the Convent to arrange for prayers for the repose of the said Marquis's soul."

Those are all the details which can be got: they are precise enough in one sense, but very vague in another. The Prior's story and the official story have this in common: that they draw a graphic picture of the punishment while leaving the crime nebulous. It is difficult to doubt that the significance of the treason, albeit a real offence, was magnified in Christina's scared imagination. That view of the matter is suggested alike by the comments of contemporaries and by her own letters of justification. Longland's letter on the subject to Thurloe may be supposed to give a dispassionate estimate—

"The Queen of Sweden murdering her Roman marquis has much displeased the Pope and all the Court of Rome, whither, if she should again repair, I suppose she would find but cold welcome."

Gui Patin, at about the same date, writes of

her as being " despised and detested " on account of the assassination ; and it is a question, of course, whether, even on the assumption that the punishment did fit the crime, a Queen of Sweden had any right to inflict the punishment in a French Palace. If we could imagine Napoleon III. detecting one of his suite in treasonable correspondence with the Comte de Chambord, and causing him to be hacked to pieces in the garden at Chislehurst, we should have a fairly close modern parallel ; and one knows pretty well how such a proceeding would have been regarded by the British Government. On the other hand, royalty, though *in partibus*, enjoyed privileges in the seventeenth century which are now denied to it. Charles II., when in exile, caught one of his suite in treasonable correspondence with Cromwell's Secretary of State, and had him shot in the Palace of the Duke of Neuburg ; and the act is seldom even thought worth mentioning by historians. So that several international jurists—Leibnitz among them—have made out a case for Christina ; and the French Court and Ministers did not know what line to take or how far it was proper for them to be censorious.

On the whole, they judged it better to hush the matter up. Louis XIV. declined to fulfil his promise to visit Christina at Fontainebleau ; but Mazarin sent her old friend Chanut, and Abbé Ondelei, to see her there, and beg that she would represent Monaldeschi's death as due to a brawl

among courtiers, in which swords were drawn. But Christina would not,—those who asked her to do so did not know her. She had a kind of courage, though not the best kind, and cannot be classed with the wicked who flee when no man pursueth. Not pursuit, but only remonstrance, had to be faced now. She could not bear to think that she had been frightened into an action of which she ought to be ashamed; and the choice lay for her between appearing to be ashamed, and appearing to be as bold as brass.

And brass, assuredly, could not have been more bold than she now showed herself. Her conscience was covered with a coat of brass far thicker than that which had failed to protect her victim from the assassins. Hints that she would do well to slink away out of France were wasted on her,—she, too, knew how to drop hints. She meant to stay,—and not only to stay, but to be entertained in style. Thrown on her defence, she defended herself with the fury of a wild cat at bay. We must have her justification before us at full length.

CHAPTER XVIII

Christina's letters in justification of the putting to death of Monaldeschi — Letter to Santinelli — To Mazarin — To Chanut—Her proposal to visit Cromwell—Reasons why the proposal was declined—Her second visit to Paris—Her return to Rome—Her financial difficulties

THE first person to whom Christina justified herself was Santinelli : the rascal who had robbed her, was still robbing her, and had no intention of ceasing to rob her. Never for one moment, she wrote, had she believed Monaldeschi's aspersions on Santinelli's character ; but she had pretended to believe them, in order to bring the criminal's guilt home to him—

" In the end, he died, confessing his infamy and admitting your innocence, protesting that he had invented the whole fantastic story in order to ruin you.

" Take note of his example, and pray God that he may never let you lose either your intelligence or your honour. Always behave like a gentleman, and never do anything unworthy of that character.

" You need not trouble to justify my action to any one. I do not propose to render an account of it to any one but God, who would have

punished mē if I had pardoned the traitor his abominable delinquency. Let that suffice for you.

"My conscience assures me that I acted in accordance with the precepts of divine justice, and that I could not act, and ought not to have acted, otherwise.

"Keep yourself in a good temper, and I will do my best to procure you the consolation on which your heart is set."

That consolation being a dukedom, which Christina solicited for Santinelli, though without success.

The second justification was addressed to Mazarin, and ran thus—

"My Cousin,—M. Chanut, who is, I believe, one of the best friends I have, will assure you that I receive all your communications with respect, and, if he has not frightened me, as he expected to do, that was not for lack of terrifying eloquence. To tell you the truth, we Northerners are somewhat ferocious, and not easily alarmed. You will excuse me, therefore, if his errand to me has not had all the success that you could have wished, and I beg you to believe that I will willingly do anything to please you except showing myself afraid of you. You are aware that any man who has passed the age of thirty has ceased to be afraid of bogeys; and I, for my part, find it much easier to cut people's throats than to be

frightened by them. As for what I did to Monaldeschi, I assure you that, if I had not already done it, I would do it to-night, before going to bed. I have no reason to regret my action, but every reason to be delighted with it. Those are my sentiments. I hope they meet with your approval; but, if they do not, I shall nevertheless entertain them, always remaining, your very affectionate friend, CHRISTINA."

Finally, Christina justified herself to Chanut, sending him a copy of her letter to Mazarin, with the following covering communication :—

"I send you the letter which I have written to the Cardinal. I have nothing to add to it beyond begging you to assure him, as a message from me, that I will gladly do anything in my power for him and the King except showing fear and repenting, or disavowing any of my actions. I know of no one who is great enough, or powerful enough, to compel me to conceal my sentiments or disown my actions. I am not telling you this as a secret confided to a friend, but as a sentiment which all the world is welcome to know, and which I have no intention of disguising as long as I live."

That is the defence: characteristically feminine in two particulars,—its extreme violence and its singular lack of precision. An attempt to analyse it gets no more out of it than this:

that Christina has killed Monaldeschi because she considered that he ought to be killed ; that the nature of his offence is nobody's business but hers ; that those who ask no questions will be told no lies. It was a case of weakness affecting strength under the influence of hysteria ; and of course the obstinate withholding of information was a direct inducement to gossip to invent it. Christina sowed mysterious hints, and the inevitable crop was the legend of the *crime passionel.* "Not proven" rather than "disproved" is the verdict of some historians on that legend even now; though all the probability is in favour of a political plot, the discovery of which startled Christina into a nervous crisis.

Mazarin, as we have seen, did not want to sift the scandal, but to hush it up. That fact might seem to favour the inference drawn by Gui Patin that Monaldeschi was a spy in his employ, and that it was to him that Christina's designs were being betrayed ; but one finds no other indication to support the theory. The probability is that Mazarin did not care a snap of the fingers whether Monaldeschi lived or died, but was divided between his desire to use Christina as an instrument in his policy, and his indignation at her effrontery in exercising criminal jurisdiction in one of the royal palaces of France. The line ultimately taken, at any rate, was that Christina had been guilty of "bad taste" : an offence which must be punished, but might be purged.

The punishment took the form of a social boycott. Christina was not invited to leave Fontainebleau, but she was left to her own devices there, all through the late autumn and the early winter,—seasons when Fontainebleau is a most undesirable place of residence; and Society gave her the cold shoulder. It was a very different experience from that of the first visit, when Mlle de Montpensier had flattered her, and Ménage had presented his host of "gentlemen of distinction." She was bored to death, and yet did not like to depart under a cloud,—or without a further instalment of that money which she expected Mazarin to give her. Consequently, as offers of hospitality were not volunteered, there was nothing for it but to fish for them.

She began by fishing for an invitation to England; and an emissary was dispatched to sound Cromwell on the subject. It may or may not be true, as was alleged, that Christina hoped to persuade the Lord Protector, in whose family the Lord Protectorate had just been declared hereditary, to divorce his wife, and marry one of Mazarin's nieces. It might certainly have been a way of currying favour with Mazarin, and an illustration of the current saying that Christina only relieved herself of the cares of the Kingdom of Sweden in order to charge herself with the conduct of the affairs of Europe. It would also have been an opportunity of doing something for the greater

glory of the Church ; and one can readily believe that Christina's active mind desired both religious and political activity as a relief from the tedium of the social boycott.

But Cromwell was a difficult fish to angle for. He expressed his gratification at Christina's compliments ; he paid her for them in the same coin ; but he did not encourage her to cross the channel. He did not like meddlesome women ; he did not want expensive visitors ; and he had to consider Mrs. Cromwell. If Mrs. Cromwell had heard any whisper of the proposal for her repudiation, she would naturally have given expression to the opinions which she would inevitably have held. So that Christina abandoned her designs upon England, and fished for an invitation to Paris instead. She did really want, she said, to see the King dance in that ballet ; and she also wanted to hear the Lenten sermons of that popular preacher, Père le Bouts.

It was an excuse, of course, — and as transparent as an excuse could be. We have already seen enough of Christina's behaviour in church to measure the sincerity of any interest which she professed to take in sermons. What she really wanted was to depart from France in a blaze of glory, with plenty of money in her pocket, instead of slinking away as one on whom Court and Society had turned their backs. To that end an invitation to Paris was a *sine qua non* ; and Mazarin finally yielded to her solicitations.

He did not want Christina in Paris,—and Anne of Austria wanted her there still less; but he could not afford to quarrel with her. He had no real intention of invading Naples on her behalf; but the fear of the Spaniards that he might do so was a convenient diplomatic asset with which he did not wish to part. To that end, it was worth his while to keep up appearances, and even to spend a little money. So he sent the invitation, and Christina accepted it,—only to find that she was in Paris on sufferance, and that every one was anxious to see her go.

She saw the King dance in a ballet; she heard the popular preacher deliver some of his sermons, —though whether she listened or not one does not know. She also went to masked balls, and to the theatre,—driving there in a coach which she hailed in the street; and she attended one of the ordinary sessions of the French Academy, where the Academicians not only read her some of their unpublished compositions, but showed her how they worked at the compilation of their Dictionary. The word which she was invited to study was *Jeu*, and one of the definitions ran: *Jeux de Prince, qui ne plaisent qu'à ceux qui les font*,—practical jokes, that is to say, which divert the perpetrator at the expense of his victim. According to some accounts, Christina flushed scarlet; according to others, she laughed. It may well be that she blushed first, and then laughed to cover the blushes,

not knowing whether the strangely apposite example had or had not been chosen to embarrass her.

In any case, however, she was an unwelcome guest, permitted to make her demonstration, entertained because, if she were not entertained, she would seem to have been snubbed and disgraced, but overwhelmed with hints that the Court would feel obliged if she would cut her visit as short as possible. It reached her ears that Anne of Austria had said that she should herself leave Paris if her guest outstayed her welcome any longer; and it is said that Mazarin offered her money on condition that she would not stand upon the order of her going, but would go at once.

So she went—not even waiting to hear the last of the popular preacher's sermons—embarking at Toulon for Leghorn, feeling dissatisfied and snubbed, but leaving a diplomatic representative to cover her retreat. Her ambitious schemes of conquest were not formally abandoned, either by her or by Mazarin. She even, on her way to Rome, concluded a kind of a treaty of alliance with the Duke of Modena, who undertook to help her,—albeit on conditions which he must have known it to be impossible for her to fulfil. But the scheme remained in the air; and it became more and more evident that it was never to materialise. It died, as it were, a natural death; and Christina found other and more urgent preoccupations.

Then, as so often during her life, she was vexed with the lack of pence; for though she was never avaricious, she was always extravagant, never troubling to ask the cost of anything that she wanted, and keeping no account of her expenditure. And of course there were those who took advantage of her carelessness. Notably Francesco Santinelli took advantage of it. He induced her to sign receipts which she had not read; he induced her to dismiss her Swiss Guard, and pawned the uniforms of the guardsmen; he pawned plate and jewellery, and lied as to the disposition of the proceeds; he borrowed articles from Christina's wardrobe, on the pretence that they were wanted for a theatrical entertainment, and pawned them instead of restoring them; even Christina's ermine cloak, — a garment of State, embroidered with gold crowns, — was pawned.

It might not have mattered—her finances might have stood the strain—if the expected subsidies had arrived from Sweden. But they did not arrive—or, at all events, only a fraction of them came to hand; so that there was a double strain on Christina's resources. She wanted to live her own life,—which meant that she wanted to live in grand style as a munificent patron of the arts; but the wherewithal was lacking. Something, it was quite clear, would have to be done,—a good deal, in fact, would have to be done. Not only must the financial situation be cleared up at Rome; but Christina must also

once again scour Europe—*à la recherche de la pièce de cent sous.*

Her position at Rome, in fact, was uncomfortable in more ways than one. Santinelli was not only robbing her, but was also compromising her by making love to the Pope's great-niece, for whom the Pope did not consider him an eligible suitor; and the Pope was, further, by no means satisfied with Christina's explanation of Monaldeschi's violent death. He accorded her that "cold welcome" which Longland had predicted to Thurloe; he complained that she made jests which were in bad taste; and he spoke of her as "barbarian, by birth and education, with barbarous ideas about everything," and commented adversely on her "savage and almost intolerable pride."

That of the pet convert, whom he had feasted, and expected to prove a shining example to Christendom! It is always disconcerting to see a religious leader commit a crime; and Alexander VII. may well have felt as embarrassed as did Joanna Southcott when Mary Bateman, whom she had "sealed" as one of the "faithful," was hanged for murder at York. In view of his attitude, as well as of her other troubles, Christina needed all the help that she could get from her own energy and the discretion of her friends.

Happily she had a friend, as discreet as he was agreeable, in Cardinal Azzolino. We have already seen her gazing at his portrait when she

left Rome, for the first time, in quest of adventure. Now, at the hour of her need, he came back into her life, entered it as a dominating force, and acquired an influence over her waywardness which he was never quite to lose.

CHAPTER XIX

Cardinal Azzolino — His character and his relations with Christina — Christina's financial embarrassments — *À la recherche de la pièce de cent sous*—Her return to Sweden —Her unpleasant reception there—Her quarrel with the Bishop of Abö—The threats which she addressed to him —She shakes the dust of Sweden off her feet and repairs to Hamburg

WHETHER Cardinal Azzolino was everything that a Cardinal ought to be or not, at least he conforms agreeably to certain popular conceptions of Cardinals. He was only moderately pious, and only moderately clever; but he was young and handsome,—a gentleman of distinguished manners, and a cultivated amateur of the arts. Perhaps the best way of putting it will be to say that, like many other prelates, but more successfully than most of them, he prolonged the traditions of the Renaissance into the seventeenth century.

He made no such noise in the world as Cardinals Richelieu, Mazarin, de Retz, and Alberoni; not only because he was less able than they were, but also because he was less ambitious and more indolent, liking neither risks nor responsibilities. He was supple, indeed,—owing his red hat to services supply rendered in some

backstairs Vatican business,—and he enjoyed figuring as a Tadpole or Taper in a Vatican intrigue ; but he was, before everything else, a scholar, a connoisseur, and an accomplished man of the world,—reported to be very successful with ladies : such a man as Talleyrand was before opportunity pricked his ambition.

How far he was successful with Christina is, to this hour, a matter of conjecture. "*Peu importe, à mon avis,*" writes Baron de Bildt, who has pushed his inquiries further than any one else, "*si Azzolino a partagé ou non la couche de la reine*" ; and no doubt, if the secret had really mattered, it would not have been kept. All that one can justly say is that very close intimacy is implied in some of the Cardinal's communications to third parties,—to the Papal Nuncio, at Warsaw, for instance, who wanted to know, in circumstances which we shall come to, whether, if Christina married, she would be likely to have an heir—

"Her Majesty's temperament" (Azzolino then wrote) "is still so vigorous that one might reasonably expect her to be capable of bearing children for another ten years to come. At any earlier period, her excessive ardour would perhaps have prevented her from doing so."

He gave no reasons for the opinion,—he may only have said what Christina herself told him to say ; but one is nevertheless reminded of the

Cardinal Azzolino.

French lady's famous question to a gentleman who vouched too emphatically for another lady's virtue: "*Comment faites-vous, monsieur, pour etre si sûr de ces chose-là?*" Perhaps the Cardinal's ready wit would have prompted a suitable reply to the inquiry; but we need not try to frame one for him. The importance of his friendship for Christina does not depend upon that detail. Azzolino may or may not have entered Christina's life as a lover: he certainly entered it as a steadying influence, a peacemaker, and a level-headed financial counsellor.

First of all, he helped her to make her peace with the Pope, whose indignation at the doing to death of Monaldeschi was as nothing compared with his wrath at the presumption of her young friend Santinelli in proposing marriage to his own grandniece. Christina was persuaded to get the suitor out of the way by sending him on a mission to Vienna; and she received the papal benediction as her reward. Then Azzolino sent for Santinelli's accounts, and went through them, and showed Christina how she had been deceived by the man whom she had trusted. Among his other rascalities, it appeared, Santinelli had accounted for some of the money which he had stolen by saying that he had lent it to Azzolino, whose feelings, he represented, would be hurt, if Christina reminded him of the loan.

All that, and much else, came out during Santinelli's absence, much as a fraudulent bank clerk's embezzlements are discovered when he

takes a holiday. Christina was furious and threatened prosecution ; but Santinelli was careful not to venture within the jurisdiction of any Court before which she could cite him. She recovered hardly anything, and had to pawn her diamonds to procure ready money. Meanwhile, Azzolino reconstituted her household for her ; and he would seem to have been a good judge of servants, for the new men whom he introduced remained in her service until either their death or hers. So that she now had a strong man, who was also a charming man, to lean upon,—a very necessary support to her, in spite of her passionate desire for freedom, if her life was to present any appearance of stability.

She was toying, at the time, with a fresh scheme of high politics : nothing less than a Last Crusade of all the Powers of Christendom against the Heathen Turk. It was an anticipation of our modern Concert of Europe for which there was something to be said ; for the Heathen Turk of those days was no Sick Man, but a healthy and full-blooded raider and marauder, threatening to overrun Europe in the name of the Prophet, and destined only to be prevented from sacking Vienna by the timely arrival of John Sobieski. Christina not only discussed her elaborate plan for his discomfiture with the Venetian Ambassador, but also spent 3100 crowns on preliminary expenses towards the raising of a regiment of Crusaders, which was never, in fact, raised. At the same time, she was embellishing her Roman

palace like a museum with the art treasures which she had removed from Stockholm and warehoused for a time at Antwerp.

Hence the pressing need for substantial and regular remittances; for Azzolino, adroit financier though he was, needed assets as well as liabilities in order to make the budget balance. And Christina's remittances were neither regular nor substantial; for Charles Gustavus, though honest, was hard pressed. He was a pious and plucky little man who shouted his prayers at the top of his voice and maintained that a great Prince should always be at war, in order to put the fear of God into his neighbours. Sometimes Denmark, sometimes Poland, and sometimes Holland was the enemy; and, whoever was the enemy, the war always cost Charles Gustavus more than he could afford. The territories on which Christina's revenues were secured were overrun, and yielded no profit; and there was no other source from which the deficit could be made good. And so once more: *À la recherche de la pièce de cent sous!*

It was not the most creditable of quests. At a time when Sweden was at war with half Europe, and was hard driven, we find Christina entering into negotiations with her country's enemies; proposing that, if the Emperor would come to terms with her, she would give him Pomerania, and "do something"—one fails to understand exactly what—for the advantage of the Catholic religion. It is an example, no doubt,

of unreflecting egoism ; but, as nothing came of it, we need not insist. It was the general doctrine of the time—not the individual opinion of Christina—that countries were made for Kings, rather than Kings for countries. Moreover, her lack of means was awkward, even to the point of imperilling her social position. The Italians, reported Longland to Thurloe, "love not such converts as lack money." And then came the news that Gustavus Charles had died, leaving a boy of four as his heir ; and there was some doubt whether the Regents would fulfil his promise to pay Christina's allowance. She concluded that she had better go to Sweden to look after her interests ; and the Popé was once more sufficiently anxious to see her go, to help her with the travelling expenses. He exerted his influence at the pawnshop, to secure her an advance of 20,000 crowns at four per cent.

At last, on July 20, 1660, she set out, with a small suite, and, travelling by way of Rimini, Verona, Trieste, Augsburg, and Nuremberg, arrived at Hamburg on August 18. The Emperor had already signed terms of peace with Sweden, without taking any notice of her overtures ; most wisely, for she obviously was not in a position to carry out her undertakings. She had other schemes, however, at the back of her brain, in addition to those which she avowed. Just as she, years before, had named Charles Gustavus her heir, why should not the Regents now return the compliment and make her

the heir of Charles Gustavus' delicate little boy ?

There were several reasons why they should not; and, in any case, they did not want to. Having settled down to play first fiddle in the reign of a minor, they had no desire to change the part for that of second fiddle under the direction of a capricious major. Most likely, too, religious considerations weighed with them, as they certainly did with the Lutheran clergy, who, indeed, as we have seen, owed Christina a personal as well as a professional grudge, on account of her behaviour in church and her loudly expressed objections to long sermons. Already, before she arrived, those sermons began to be heard throughout the land, like the warning rumbles of an approaching thunderstorm which would presently burst and be dangerous.

As regards Christina's own motives for seeking to recover honours which she had so recently renounced, little can be said with certainty. A vague desire to " do something " for the greater glory of the Catholic faith may have been one influence at work—she was always readier to take sides in religious conflicts than to live religiously. Resentment at slights and snubs sustained at Rome may also have impelled her to make herself important in Sweden ; for there is no question that, much as she loved her liberty, she loved importance too. Or she may have been chiefly moved by anxiety about her financial position, and have felt that, if she were the

acknowledged heir to the throne, her allowance would be more likely to be paid regularly.

In any case she was, as people say, "asking for trouble" when she put forward her proposal; and she did not avert it by writing complimentary letters to persons in high positions, addressing them as "cousin," and saluting Count Brahé in particular as the Saviour of his Country; nor did she disarm suspicion by begging the Governor-General of her Domains to "assure all good Swedes that they are wrong in deprecating my arrival." The good Swedes proposed to settle that point without the assistance of her advice; and there were not wanting those who proposed to settle it by peremptory and drastic action—

"She had better," suggested Brahé—he whom she had just flattered with the title of Saviour of his Country—"be sent to Aland in the charge of an honourable and determined man."

"Would not that," asked Magnus de la Gardie—he who had once flaunted himself as Christina's lover—"be rather like taking her prisoner?"

"It would," replied Brahé. "That is exactly what I mean, and I think it would be the very best thing that could happen to her."

A thing, however, more easily said than contrived in the case of the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus, who had friends in Sweden as well

as enemies, and whose grievances might be championed by foreign Powers. It was decided, instead, to stop her at the frontier; and even that proved to be impossible. Christina was above all things self-willed; and, just as she had insisted upon going to Paris in spite of the hints of Mazarin, so now she insisted upon coming to Stockholm in spite of the hints of Count Brahé. Her reply to the letter which he caused to be handed to her by Linde, the son of her old nurse, was courteous, but curt—

"My Cousin,—I esteem you so highly that I cannot possibly feel offended by any sentiments which you express; and you use such flattering language in your communication, that I regret extremely to find myself placed in circumstances in which it is incompatible with my honour to follow your advice."

So she waived him aside; and she also waived Linde aside, though he had been authorised to stop her by force; with the result that the Swedish Court, though it wanted her just as little as the French Court, had to make believe, like the French Court, that she was its honoured guest. She was received in the very apartments which she had once occupied as Queen,—conducted to them by the boy-king himself; and she promptly converted one of the rooms into a chapel, and made arrangements for hearing mass.

So far she had triumphed; but that was the end of her triumph. Her reception was rather like that of a mother-in-law who insists upon paying a visit to her daughter's household at an inconvenient season, and then, not content with having intruded, proceeds to turn the household upside down. The King, of course, was too young to protest, and the Queen-Dowager may have been too mild or too polite; and Christina was popular with the common people. But the clergy and the nobility were as stubborn as rocks, and no headway was to be made with them. They had allowed the cannon to salute her; but then they proceeded from slights to snubs, and from snubs to insults.

Even her demand for money clearly due to her was not accorded without debate. "The Queen," said one of the debaters, when she pressed for an immediate answer, "has taken four or five years to prepare her claims, so she can surely allow the clergy as many days in which to examine them"; and though those claims were ultimately allowed, the political claims were hardly even considered. That was the first clerical vengeance on the Queen who did not like long sermons, and there was worse to follow. The pulpits, throughout the land, broke out into a minatory chorus. Christina's Catholic chapel was dismantled, and the priests were ordered out of the country. There were some very painful interviews; the decision to continue Christina's allowance being com-

municated to her in the following offensive language :—

"When we reflect upon the last will and testament of the Great Gustavus, we find it set forth in very explicit terms that any one who departs from our doctrine and embraces Popery shall lose all his rights and possessions in the Kingdom of Sweden. We are willing, however, that Her Majesty shall continue to enjoy the revenues granted to her, not in virtue of the agreement entered into at the time of her abdication, but simply and solely in view of reputation and of the signal merits of her ancestors."

It was added that the Lutherans were well aware of the Catholic doctrine that faith need not be kept with hereties, that Christina had shown gross contempt for the religion of her fathers, by changing her name from Augusta to Alexandra, and that the Lutherans were, therefore, under no obligation to keep faith with her : with much more to the same effect, which first reduced Christina to tears, and then roused her to rhetoric—

"We know very well what the Pope wants," said old Archbishop Lenæus. "We know his zeal for our souls."

"I know the Pope better than you do," retorted Christina, "and I am quite sure he

would not give four crowns for the souls of the whole lot of you."

And then there was another exchange of compliments, in the course of which Christina made a final allusion to her *bête noire*—

"But why did you desert the true Lutheran faith?" asked the Archbishop's chaplain.

"Why? Because I was disgusted with your long and idiotic sermons," rejoined the Queen.

The honours of the interview were with her; but her ordeal was not yet over. She was, as it were, to be stabbed in the dark by the Bishop of Abö, who wrote letters, relating that he had seen her in tears, and adding a gloss of his own: that her tears were due to repentance of her change of religion. That, as it seemed to Christina, was the unkindest cut of all. She demanded that the Protestant prelate should be punished for denying that she was a good Catholic; and she concluded with a threat which must have had a shocking significance to all those who had heard of the fate of Monaldeschi—

"Should I, despite my expectations, be so unfortunate as to fail to obtain due satisfaction through Your Majesty's intervention, I trust that Your Majesty will not be surprised if I should myself take steps to bring down upon this Bishop's head a punishment adequate to

the enormity of his crime and the intolerable dishonour which he has tried to inflict upon me."

A threat, as one cannot but suppose, to slay the Bishop of Abö, as she had slain her own Grand Equerry,—merely because he had accused her of regretting Lutheranism and weeping because she had been untrue to it. The disparity between the offence and the vengeance contemplated is, perhaps, an indication, for what it may be worth, that, if we could sift the charges against Monaldeschi, we should find a good deal less in them than Christina's champions believe; and the outburst is, at any rate, a further proof that Christina lived near the border-line of hysteria, and that nerve-storms are the best explanation of her eccentricities.

The Bishop, however, was not to be cut to pieces in a Swedish Palace; and the only visible effect of his affront was to expedite Christina's departure. This is how we find her announcing it to the Governor of her Domains—

"For Heaven's sake send me my money, that I may be able to make haste and leave this country, where they persecute me so cruelly. I assure you that, if only I could get my money, I would not stay here an hour longer; and I would rather perish in poverty elsewhere, than live in Sweden, subject to daily insults. . . . If you have any affection for me,

arrange things in such a way that I may be able to start at the earliest possible moment; for I give you my word of honour that I shall not stop a single instant after my affairs are settled."

And so—her affairs being settled more or less—her nerve-storm whirled her back to Hamburg.

CHAPTER XX

Life at Hamburg—Manifold preoccupations—The Mrs. Jellyby of the North—Return to Rome—Social life—Christina's attitude towards the Roman ladies—Questions of etiquette—Christina in the rôle of peacemaker—Further financial embarrassments—Decision to pay yet another visit to Sweden

At Hamburg, Christina lingered about a year. People were kind, and made her comfortable; and the seventeenth century was a leisurely age in which nothing, unless it were murder, was done in a hurry. One can suggest no other reason why it should have taken her twelve months to place all the threads of her financial affairs in the hands of the Jew Texeira, who was thenceforward to be her banker.

She thought that she was busy; she may even have thought that she was profitably occupied. One is compelled sometimes to think of her as the Mrs. Jellyby of the North, as well as its Minerva,—mistaking movement for life, and persuaded that time spent fussily was time spent well. Though nothing was to come of all her labours, her hands were full of work, and her head was full of projects. It occurred to her to simplify her banking operations by searching for the philosopher's stone, while, at

the same time, pledging her credit for the cost of a crusade against the Heathen Turk, and compassing sea and land to make one proselyte for the Catholic Church. One can sum it all up by saying that she was very busy, doing nothing in particular.

In the matter of the crusade it may very well be that the bulk of her work was suggested by her secretary in order to justify his stipend. It had been begun before she left Sweden, and was to be continued after her return to Rome. Reams of paper were covered with circular letters, addressed in various languages to various potentates; the principal circular being copied by hand no less than ninety-eight times. The secretary was also dispatched on a tour, to discuss the details of the scheme with those whom it concerned. But all without result, — except that the secretary got his salary. The hour had not yet come for the last crusader to ride into Byzantium and hear mass in Saint Sophia; and Azzolino wrote, with melancholy cynicism, to a friend—

"The Queen is very apt to take things up and drop them again before they are half finished."

Another of her abortive schemes was one for obtaining concessions for Catholic worshippers in Protestant countries. Some of the potentates

addressed on that subject did not even trouble to answer Christina's letters; others pointed out to her that, in order to obtain these concessions, it would be necessary to accord equivalent concessions to Protestant worshippers in Catholic countries; and Christina was constrained to admit that she had not thought of that. Her proposals on the subject to the French Court were accompanied by requests for salaried appointments for sundry of her friends and servants—valets and chambermaids as well as captains of the Guard—and the response to these requests also was in the negative: which is not very surprising in view of what had happened at Fontainebleau.

Equally unsuccessful, of course, were the experiments in the transmutations of metals, conducted with the help of the alchemist Borri; but we must not charge Christina with exceptional credulity because Borri deceived her. She was not his only royal victim,—he also fooled the King of Denmark, persuading that monarch to build him, at enormous cost, a portable laboratory which a team of oxen carted from Palace to Palace, in the train of all the royal progresses. The reason which he ultimately gave for not imparting his secrets to Christina was that he did not like her well enough; and it is, at any rate, quite certain that neither she nor any one else ever learnt any useful alchemy from him, and that he ended

his days in one of the dungeons of the Holy See.

The one success, in short, which did attend Christina's activities at Hamburg was the conversion of Professor Lambecius, whom she was the better able to influence because she found him in distress. He had fled from his professorship because he could not keep order in his class, and because his enemies had accused him of heterodoxy ; and he had married a wife with whom he lived unhappily. Consequently he lent a willing ear to Christina's suggestion that he should desert his wife and become a Catholic ; and he never had any reason to regret the step. The Emperor made him his Chief Librarian at Vienna, where he wrote many Latin epigrams in Christina's praise—

> "Perfugium Musis, quo non præstantius ullum
> Sol oriens terris, sol videt occiduus,
> Lambecium, regina, tuum quæ fortis iniquæ
> Casibus et tristi sustrahis invidiæ."

Et cetera, et cetera.

And so back to Rome, where, this time, she was well received, — everything forgiven and forgotten,—met by Cardinals at the entrance of the City, and conducted straight to the Pope, whose feet she was privileged to kiss. One of the dispatches of the Venetian Ambassador shows us what sort of a figure she cut at the audience—

"Her hair was tied up with ribbons of various

colours, arranged at random, and was sprinkled with the dust of travel instead of toilet powder. A veil, attached to the back of her head, hung over her shoulder, and was gathered up under one of her arms. She wore a man's *just-au-corps*, and a skirt so transparent that one could see the breeches underneath it; that skirt constituting her sole article of specifically feminine attire."

If the Pope was shocked, he did not show it; and now, at last, Christina was free, or very nearly so, to live that life of cultivated ease which she believed to be the one thing she had dreamt of since the day of her abdication.

Her new home in the Riario Palace was not yet quite ready to receive her; but she took possession of it in January 1663. It was not only a palace, but also a museum, a picture gallery, and a library, filled with the produce of the plunder of the Thirty Years War, supplemented by many purchases, including one hundred and thirty pieces of magnificent tapestry. The gardens were laid out with taste, and there were forty-five horses in the stables. A Court, composed for the Queen by Azzolino, included a Duke, who was the brother of a Cardinal, and a General who had once borne arms against Gustavus Adolphus. The gentlemen-in-waiting numbered twenty—among them Sir Robert Dudley, a descendant of a natural son of the Earl of Leicester, whom the Emperor had made Duke of Northumberland,—and, if there were no maids-of-

honour, that was because Christina declined to have any woman about her of higher rank than that of chambermaid.

Roman society, too, was affable,—the Pope himself called; and, if the Roman ladies did not call in great numbers, the only reason was that Christina did not appear to be particularly pleased to see them when they did so, but kept them standing, like inferiors, instead of asking them to be seated like guests and equals. It was her way of hinting to them that their conversation bored her; and it was against her principles to allow herself to be bored. The sex, birth, and pretensions of her interlocutors made no difference to her. We read, in an Ambassador's dispatch, that when a certain nobleman "of ancient lineage but only moderate talents" condoled with her on the apparent loneliness of her life, she rejoined curtly: "I would rather spend three days alone than half an hour in your society."

She had abundant opportunity, however, of meeting men who did not bore her: scholars, artists, and men of science. These had the run of her library, and her collections, and were only asked, in return, to entertain her with cultivated conversation. She herself spent long hours in her library, and other long hours in her laboratory. The search for the philosopher's stone was forbidden by the Church, but she nevertheless engaged in it: she and Azzolino together. The library was specially

rich in books and manuscripts bearing upon this branch of experimental chemistry ; and Christina long lived in hope of discovering at the bottom of a crucible the gold which she so sorely needed. Altogether, one would have thought, she had at last reached one of those happy backwaters of life in which the fortunate may take their ease and let the turbid stream flow by, untroubling them.

But has life such backwaters ? Or do they only exist in the harassed imaginations of the neurotic ? It is doubtful ; but it is certain that tranquillity in a backwater was no more for Christina than contentment in a small provincial town is possible for the majority of those who flee from the exciting dissipations of cities. *Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt.* Restlessness was in her blood, and it distressed her to feel that the world was moving, and that she was out of it. A little rest sufficed, and then she must once more be up and doing—up and moving—up and in evidence : popping her head out, as it were, from her backwater, to see how the rest of the world was getting on, and then emerging to bear a hand in the proceedings. And sometimes, of course, the need of money—for she could not live her own life satisfactorily on a small income — called her forth.

First of all, she was brought out of her seclusion by a question of etiquette. The new French Ambassador, the Duc de Créqui, proposed to call,

but desired to know, before doing so, with what ceremony he would be received. Would he be asked to sit down ? If so, would he be asked to sit in an arm-chair or only on a stool ? It was an important detail, not to be left to be determined by the extent of Christina's interest in his conversation : there must be a protocol, and he must be assured that Christina would abide by its prescriptions. So there were reams of correspondence, as the result of which it was agreed that the Ambassador should be offered an arm-chair if Cardinals were present, but, if Cardinals were not present, should take a lower place on a stool.

Next, we find Christina's tranquillity disturbed by a brawl between the soldiers of the Pope's Corsican Guard and those of the Ambassador's household. What the brawl was about one does not know, — such brawls are often about nothing in particular. It is said to have originated because the Ambassador was caught out on some gallant expedition ; but that statement is not proved. In any case, the French, being in the minority, got the worst of it. The Ambassador was mobbed and blood was shed ; his palace was threatened, and a page was shot on the doorstep. One cannot discover that it was any business of Christina's ; but she made it her business, putting herself forward as a peacemaker ; and once again there were reams of correspondence. We need not trouble much about it ; but there must be a quotation from

a letter which Christina wrote on the subject to Azzolino—

"When all is over, the Pope will understand that I have rendered him an important service in this matter. Try, once more, to persuade him to give the Ambassador satisfaction; for I foresee that there will be grave trouble if he fails to do so. Some of the Corsicans will have to be sacrificed. If the guilty cannot be discovered, then the innocent must be punished, in order to make it clear that they are not being shielded, and that you are having recourse to no tricks in order to protect them. My proposal may strike you as shocking; but great evils require extreme remedies."

Truly it was bloodthirsty advice to give to the Vicar of Christ; but one can easily believe that, to a Pope as to a Queen, a Corsican more or less did not seem to matter much, if the sacrifice of a few could preserve the suavity of international relations. It is no unknown thing for the great to put that interpretation on the doctrine that it is expedient that one man should die for the people. The crisis passed, however, concluding with an amiable letter in which Louis XIV. assured Christina that it was not his practice to "enter into rivalry with ladies except in the matter of civility"; and Christina's next worry was connected with the lack of gold, alike in the crucible and in the bank.

Her agents in Sweden were cheating her, and the Jew Texeira could not be persuaded to forward money which he had not received. Of 107,000 crowns due only 58,000 crowns came to hand; and Christina found herself unable to take up bills which she had accepted. Among other creditors, her former favourite Count Tott, now Swedish Ambassador in Paris, held her bill for 24,000 crowns, and was beginning to wonder when he would be able to exchange it for cash. He was not very pressing, but agreed to take part payment in commodities,—6000 crowns worth of chalk. Other creditors were not so amenable; and it became necessary to send a trustworthy Italian named Adami—a relative of Azzolino's—to Hamburg and Sweden, to try to straighten matters out. He was unexpectedly successful; and he also brought back a political report which decided Christina herself to pay Sweden yet another visit.

Her motives for going there were a subject of speculation at the time; and all that is certain about them even now is that there is no reason for believing them to have been serious. Her attitude towards Sweden was rather like that of a bride towards her parents' house. She did not want to live there, but she did not like the idea that she was unwelcome there. Still less did she like the idea of being excluded on account of her religious convictions by Regents whose attitude did not reflect the general feeling towards the daughter of the great Gustavus

Adolphus; and that was the exasperating state of things.

In 1660, as we have seen, Christina had been deprived of her chapel and her priest, even at the risk—a serious one to her, as a letter to Azzolino shows—of her dying, unannealed. In 1664 a Secret Commission had sat to consider the question of her return. It had concluded that she might come to Sweden,—but on conditions. Wherever else she might claim the privileges of extra-territoriality, she must not claim them in Sweden. Sweden was a Protestant country, and there must be no tampering with its Protestantism. Not only must Christina dispense with a chapel and a priest; she must not even attend mass in the chapel of a Catholic Ambassador. Nor must she come to Stockholm at any time when the Diet was not sitting there; and, if she did come, her Court must be composed exclusively of Swedish Lutherans.

Such were the rigorous provisions. Christina had not been officially informed of all their details, but had received the information from private correspondents. Naturally, she had no intention of submitting to them; but they were not irrevocable, and they might be revoked. Adami reported that they had not been carried without considerable opposition, that their strict application was improbable, and that Christina had partisans in the country, even among the nobility and clergy.

That was enough for Christina in her restless

mood: a challenge to be up and doing, and to assert herself. She took the challenge up, and we once more find her and her small suite speeding along the high roads of Italy and Germany.

CHAPTER XXI

The second sojourn at Hamburg—Christina's fears of assassination — Her manner of life — Her correspondence with Azzolino—Her fears that his piety will prevent him from being her lover—A fancy dress ball

THERE is a good deal that is typical in the story of Christina's second journey to the North. Though it was mainly concerned with the promotion of her material interests, she prefaced it with a " retreat " in a Carmelite nunnery ; and then she raced to Hamburg, with the speed of a courier, — sometimes sleeping on straw in poor wayside inns, and letting the weaker members of her suite drop out by the way,— though, for all the hurry that there was, she might just as well have walked. Hamburg was, as it were, a junction at which she had to wait for the next conveyance,—which was so long in coming that it began to seem doubtful whether it would ever come.

The financial part of her business, indeed, made progress, though not so rapidly as she could have wished. Adami proved honest and capable, and enabled her, if not to reduce her debts, at least to see her way towards their

reduction, and to remit money for the maintenance of her Roman establishment. But the arrangements for her visit to Sweden hung fire. Her reception was agreed to in principle, but there was trouble about the details. It was postponed until the meeting of the Diet; and the meeting of the Diet was itself put off from month to month. The question, too, whether Christina should be allowed to hear mass, and to have priests about her, in Sweden, was not to be settled in a day. The Regents, apparently,—or the majority of them,—though they hesitated to forbid her the Kingdom, wished her to get tired of waiting.

She did get tired of waiting, but still she waited,—she was that sort of woman. When she got tired of her schemes for adventures and crusades, she dropped them and thought no more about them, lightly quitting one hobby for another; but this case was different. Her rights, her dignity, and her income were simultaneously at stake. She was bored at Hamburg, and from time to time she was ill there; she probably had malaria, and she certainly suffered from fever and headaches. She longed to be back at Rome, among her books, her art treasures, and her crucibles, with Azzolino to talk to. Rome, it seemed to her, was the only place in the world worth living in, and Azzolino the only man in the world worth talking to. Staying at Hamburg, with the view of forcing her way into Sweden, where she

had no desire to remain, was uncommonly like cutting off her nose to spite her face; but she felt that the end justified the means, and that the sacrifice ought to be made.

Two occurrences strengthened her determination to weary the Regents with her importunities instead of allowing them to tire her out with their neglect. It was, at last, formally intimated to her that, if she came to Sweden, she also must dispense with religious privileges; and she learnt that one of her agents had lent some of her money to the Grand Chancellor,—that Magnus de la Gardie who had once been her favourite, and was now the chief opponent of her return. The proposed interference with her religious liberty was a challenge which she could not refuse: she did not believe that they would dare,—but she would see. As for the money, she told her agent that he must recover it for her, or repay her out of his own pocket, adding: "Thank God and the kindness of my heart that I do not inflict some other severer punishment which you well deserve." He probably remembered the fate of Monaldeschi and was frightened; but the money was lost beyond recovery. The agent had no assets, and Magnus de la Gardie had not borrowed with the intention of repaying.

Harassed nerves, however, are much in evidence in the outburst; and they are also much in evidence throughout the correspondence with Azzolino. Christina generally has a headache when she writes, and is frequently afraid that

she is about to have a toothache too. In one letter she even expresses a fear of assassination—

"Texeira's timidity should surprise you. No doubt it is excessive, but nevertheless it is well to take precautions. The passion for power inspires strange proceedings. In Sweden, as elsewhere, they know how to use the dagger and the bowl; and, to tell you the truth, I believe they are making their preparations to employ both, in order to settle my hash. My presence is more embarrassing to them than you think, and the country's affection for me, great though it is, affords me no protection, for, if I were less loved, I should have less to fear."

She represents herself, that is to say, as in danger, but not afraid; whereas the truth seems to be that she was afraid, but not in danger. There is no reason to believe that the Regents had any designs whatever against her life; and she ceased to fear such designs when the nervous crisis passed.

Her long series of letters to Azzolino deal, however, not only with her private affairs, but with all subjects under the sun. They are everything that letters can be: business letters, love letters, and diplomatic dispatches rolled into one. There is no sustained passion in them; but they generally end with a declaration—sometimes in cipher—that the writer will be

"true till death," and hopes for an equal fidelity in return. There are many hints that she is not quite sure of that fidelity: hints of a fear that absence is not making the Cardinal's heart grow fonder, but that he is giving grounds for jealousy.

"You edify me very much" (she writes) "by the moral and theological lessons which you draw from all the accidents of life, and I don't doubt that all your thoughts were, as usual, of God, when you went to the French Ambassador's to see the theatricals, and that the two ladies who recited there, and are the delight of Rome, merely annoyed you by catching your eye. I suppose you set to work, like the Lord Jesus, to convert them. A virtue so scrupulous as yours would not have braved such a spectacle for any other purpose."

There is certainly an indication there that the Cardinal's fancy has been straying, or, at any rate, that Christina believes it to have strayed; and the passage should be read side by side with another passage, mostly in cipher, from another letter—

"I thought my last cipher contained the answer to yours, but I will now add that I hope, by God's grace, never to do anything to offend Him, and never to give you reason to do so either. But this determination will not prevent

me from loving you until the hour of death; and, since the obligations of piety prevent you from being my lover, I will excuse you from being my servant, for I wish to live and die your slave."

And then, again, a little later—

"Your letter of January 15 shows me that you have, at last, become a saint for good and all; and I congratulate you. I promise that I will work, during your lifetime, at your canonisation, on condition that you will work for mine when I am dead; and, in reply to your sermon, I will merely tell you that I know very well what I owe to God, to you, and to myself, and will try to discharge the debt."

Assuredly the Rubicon must have been crossed before a Queen can write in that tone to a Cardinal; and the suggestion is fairly obvious: that the Cardinal has been fickle, and is using religion as a cloak to cover the diminution of his love. What grounds there may have been for the suggestion one cannot say,—for his own contribution to the correspondence has disappeared; but one surmises that, though he was very fond of Christina, he also had some fear of being compromised by her,—perhaps to the detriment of a future candidature for the Papacy. And it is also probable, since he was very young for a Cardinal, that he had been diverting himself.

The trouble, however, whatever its source, was only taken seriously at occasional moments of depression; the outbursts of peevishness and jealousy only cropping up here and there in the course of communications chiefly devoted to business and the topics of the day. If the proof that Christina loves Azzolino occasionally flashes out, the proof that she trusts him, leans on him, and desires to be advised by him, is clear throughout. Her attachment to him, one is made to feel, was more sentimental than passionate,—and perhaps the more enduring for that reason. He is, above all else, her strong man, whose tenderness she needs; and she reveals herself to him with more candour than to any other correspondent.

Her religious inconsistencies, in particular, stand out, with astonishing clearness, in these letters. She has not yet, at this stage, arrived at mysticism. One detects no special hankering after a devout and holy life, but rather a disposition to back Catholicism against Protestantism, in the spirit in which men back Oxford against Cambridge, or *vice versa*. The note is struck on the receipt of an interesting item of news—

"We hear from Holland that the King of England and his Parliament have declared themselves Catholics, and that the King and the House of Lords are disputing with the House of Commons, which is still obstinately

heretical. I would give my life to find that this report is true; but I dare not believe it, though we know that God can work miracles, and must not doubt either His goodness or His power."

A pious enough sentiment, from a certain standpoint, but no more instinct with the real beauty of holiness than would be the sentiments of the man who should say that he believed God, in His divine goodness, to be quite capable of making Oxford win the boat-race, in spite of the odds on Cambridge. As a gloss on the passage, we will cite another which shows in what a worldly spirit Christina continued to take her religion. She has heard that a certain Father Zucchi has been preaching against her at Rome, and she requests Azzolino to send her copies of the sermons. "That," she says, "will save me the trouble of going to Church when I am back at Rome"; and she continues—

"Please tell Father Fozio from me that he is wasting his time in praying God to make me a saint; for I shall never be virtuous enough to become one, or wicked enough to make hypocritical pretences."

Yet she is clearly of opinion that good causes may be conscientiously and usefully served by persons who make no pretence to

sanctity. That fact comes out in letters written in expectation that the Pope will die, and a fresh election be necessary. A Pope should be chosen, Christina thinks, who will not, like Alexander VII., be guilty of "nepotism"; and she and Azzolino must use all their influence to that end, even though it might be easier for them to countenance nepotism and exploit it to their advantage—

"You know that I am quite disinterested, and that if I did consider my own interest, I should adopt another tone; but, as God has given me the grace to resign so much for His service, I must not grudge Him the rest. I should be happy if, by the sacrifice of my life blood, I could help God and the Church for a single day. You who know the secrets of my heart know that that is my most intense desire."

There are many other letters on the same subject, but we need not trouble about them; nor need we analyse Christina's complicated financial transactions, or repeat her scraps of news concerning the war between the English and the Dutch, and the great Fire of London. The interesting letters are those in which she talks about herself: her affection for Azzolino, her boredom at Hamburg, her daily occupations, and her desperate endeavours to distract herself.

It appears that Azzolino has reproached her

with reading too much, to the detriment of her health ; and she replies with a long description of her way of life. She has been prevented from reading by a terrible cold in the head " which would have prevented me from writing to any one but you "—

" But, if I give up reading, what on earth am I to do ? This is a frightful country ; everything that I see in it irritates and bores me. Elsewhere it only takes four and twenty hours to make up a day and a night ; here a single hour lasts four and twenty days, while the days which, at Rome, were only of a moment's duration, here seem to spread themselves over centuries. . . . I read very little ; but, if you had been told that I spend whole nights alone, pacing up and down my room, you would have been told the truth. It is also very true that I pass my nights in weeping for my sorrows ; but that is a secret only to be known to you and me."

A secret related, apparently, to the Cardinal's hint that he is now too devout a man to be the Queen's lover. The letter goes on to describe how Christina spends her days ; when she is not going through her accounts or receiving visitors, she plays chess or cards with members of her Court : " But, as I cannot afford to lose money, and do not wish to embarrass other people by winning from them, we do not play for money, but only for amusement "—

"But sometimes we stop playing, to talk of Rome, and of you, and flatter ourselves with the prospects of our return; and at such moments we are tolerably happy, for this pleasant hope, however remote it be, brings wretched exiles a certain measure of relief."

But, meanwhile, the society! The German blue-stockings, who imagined that Christina liked blue-stockings, and wished them to talk up to her! The German blue-stocking, in particular, who confided to her that, as her eyesight was weak, and she could read but little, she confined herself to a single book,—a compendium of the Philosophy of Aristotle!

"I report the conversation in order to show you what these Germans are like, when one is so unlucky as to meet one of them who knows four words of Latin,—a knowledge which only makes them bigger idiots than Nature has already made them. Imagine the pleasure I derive from such conversations! I am afraid the influence will affect me, for I see it affecting some of the Italians, and I sadly fear it is contagious. If that should happen, you must prepare yourself to be bored, as I doubt not that you are already by the perusal of this letter, which does not deserve to be forgiven for the foolish nonsense contained in it."

And while she was bored, Christina was also

ill : not seriously ill, but constantly incommoded by colds, headaches, toothaches, and rheumatisms. The letters are full of complaints that this, that, and the other article of food and drink upsets her ; and it is evident that she and her attendants knew little of medicine and less of hygiene. Perhaps she was wise in resisting the advice of the doctor who exhorted her to be bled, and preferring a game of battledore and shuttlecock. But she was certainly wrong in sitting all day in cold rooms, because she did not like the stuffy atmosphere which stoves engender ; and her attempt at a " milk cure " was hopelessly unscientific. She tossed off ten glasses of milk in quick succession, and then, feeling unwell, came to the conclusion that milk disagreed with her,—especially the Hamburg milk, which was brought from a distance and adulterated on the way. But she concludes—

" It seems clear, however,that all my maladies have their source in the spleen. I expect, however, that the air of Rome will cure them, and I don't doubt that you know why I think so."

Azzolino's society, that is to say, was the only remedy for spleen in which Christina had great confidence ; but she nevertheless resolved to take certain provisional measures against it by giving a fancy dress ball. It seems likely that she felt the greater need of some such diversion because, when inspecting some col-

lector's cabinet of medals, she had found one which she did not like, struck in commemoration of her own departure from Sweden. The obverse of it bore a crown, together with the Latin legend *Et sine te.* She had had it struck herself, not realising the *double entente*; but she now perceived that it might mean, not only that she could get on very well without Sweden, but also that Sweden could get on very well without her. So she burst into tears.

But the entertainment with which she hoped to cheer herself was none the less gloriously gay. Two leading members of her Court worked day and night, as stage managers, to turn a tennis court into a theatre for the performance of a ballet: the Enchanted Palace of Armida, with Characters from the Works of Tasso. The Lord High Constable Wrangel made haste to recover from eczema, in order that he might figure in it as Godfrey of Bouillon. Christina herself crossed the stage at the head of a procession of slave girls, richly bejewelled, but loaded with chains,—a tactful hint, perhaps, to Azzolino, that her heart was still in servitude to him, in spite of his piety and infidelity.

Everybody who was anybody in Hamburg was present; and everything passed off splendidly. "In order to avoid quarrels," as Christina notes, the cavaliers drew lots for their places at table and their partners. The preliminary banquet lasted for four hours,—a long time for masqueraders weighed down by ancient

Roman armour. After the table was cleared, there was a lottery; and Christina, winning the prize herself, made a present of it to Countess Wrangel. Then the dancing began, and lasted for five hours. Christina took part in it with *verve* and *entrain*. "The spectators," says one of the guests, "declared that she looked like a goddess who had descended from heaven"; but she was so tired, when the party was over, that she sent for the doctor, and consented to be bled to the extent of half a pint,—an operation which, we are told, "restored her flagging appetite."

And so the time passed until the date for the long-deferred journey to Sweden arrived.

CHAPTER XXII

The second expedition to Sweden—Christina insists upon hearing mass in defiance of the law—Her priest ordered out of the country—She herself decides to go too—She calls for post-horses and hurries back to Hamburg

In the end a departure, already so frequently postponed, had to be adjourned again, owing to bad weather; and it was not until the end of April 1667 that Christina started. But the expedition was a game of cross-purposes. The players lost their tempers in the first encounter; and the end, which came quickly, was a fiasco.

Motives on both sides were mixed. The Regents did not wish to be openly discourteous to the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus; but they did not want interference with Swedish affairs from Christina Alexandra, the convert to Popery. Their idea was, therefore, to pay her a few compliments and get rid of her. What she herself desired is not so clear; for she gave different accounts of her intentions to different people. To some she announced that her sole object was the settlement of her financial affairs,—that as soon as these were in order, she should make haste back to Rome; to others that she hoped to obtain permission to practise the rites of her religion, and to

spend the remainder of her life in Sweden, practising them.

It is impossible to say which, if either, of the two statements was intended to deceive. Consistency was never Christina's strong point; and she does not seem even to have known whether she wished to favour Catholic propagandism in Sweden. She had recently opposed a proposal for sending Jesuit evangelists there. "It would be equivalent," she said, "to sending them to their deaths; and as for converting the regular Swedish Lutherans, that is a sheer impossibility." On another occasion, she quoted, with approval, Turenne's saying: "I am a Catholic, but my sword is Protestant." But we also find her saying, in one of the letters to Azzolino—

"They have recently published here a most shocking edict against the Catholics; you can guess all that that implies. And yet I undertake to say that, if the new Pope would spend as much every year on missionary enterprise in these countries as Cardinal Chigi spends on his dogs and horses, miracles would be worked in spite of all the obstacles put in the way of the missionaries. They would not take so many and such severe precautions if they did not know how necessary it is for them to obstruct the progress which our religion would be sure to make in Sweden, if pains were taken to spread it."

The inconsistency is glaring; and it gave the Regents their handle in case Christina should refuse to lend herself to the game of make-believe which they designed to play with her. If she joined in the game, they would close their eyes, for a little while, to her religious delinquencies. If she did not join in it, then they would open their eyes, and make things unpleasant for her. It was not ambition which forbade her to join in it, but pride, and anger at the presumption of former subjects in dictating to her. So there soon was trouble and loss of temper.

Presumably Christina lost her temper the more easily because she was ill, and because she still feared that Azzolino did not love her as well as she loved him. In the letter written to him on the eve of her departure, she complains of biliousness, nausea, thirst, nervousness, insomnia, and a pain in the side—

"Worse than ever" (she protests) "at present, and continually more troublesome during the last ten or twelve days, though it has never altogether left me since I first felt it. Still, it has not, so far, prevented me from enduring the fatigue which I have to undergo, though I don't know what the end of it will be."

And then, turning to other branches of the subject—

"God willing, I shall not fail to start to-

morrow, in spite of the advice of all my friends, who assure me, with a unanimous voice, that I shall risk both my life and my liberty by going to Sweden. But that is nothing to me. I care so little for my life in the state to which I am reduced, that I do not in the least mind losing it; and since I have also made up my mind never to see you again, there remains nothing in life for me to regret."

As for her plans—

"I shall stay only a short time at Stockholm. If death does not prevent me, I shall be back at the end of a month at the latest; and if I can manage to get away in a fortnight, I shall not remain for a month. There is nothing for me to do in Sweden, except to show myself."

And that though she has just told Azzolino that she wishes to remain in Sweden for ever! The letter concludes with directions for the conduct of the establishment at Rome—

"I am desperate at the thought that I am leaving you without money. You must sell, pawn, borrow, and fear nothing. As soon as I get to Sweden, I will see that all your needs are supplied."

Then she was off, on April 28, escorted for some distance from Hamburg by Wrangel

and other nobles. She was ill,—the recorded symptoms are those of malaria; the weather was shockingly bad, and the accommodation in the inns uncomfortable. In one of them she had a bed made up on the floor of an apartment which was "more like a cellar than a bedroom." Her physician ran out of medicine; but Terlon, the French Ambassador, came to the rescue, sending her not only her doctor, but his cook, and providing her, not only with drugs, but with beef-tea. She was, she told Azzolino, within an inch of death; and convalescence found her very melancholy.

"I do not think" (she wrote) "that my life will be a long one. If only I had paid my debts, I should die happy, regretting only that I had lived two years too long, seeing that it is about two years since——"

The phrase is unfinished, and presumably relates to the state of Christina's heart. Having penned it, and broken it off, she crossed the Sound; and then the great game of make-believe and cross-purposes began.

No fault could be found with the splendour of the reception. The guns of the fleet saluted, and Senators awaited the arrival of the royal guest. Magnus de la Gardie's brother Pontus was there with a carriage. Seven hundred cavalry and a regiment of infantry presented arms; and the military bands were playing.

The banquet of welcome was sumptuous; and the house to which Christina was escorted was furnished as a palace, with abundance of rich tapestry, and a marvellous bed of state, hung with gold-embroidered green velvet. There was no failure of respect, no breach of etiquette. But then, unfortunately, Christina blundered, and broke the unwritten rules of the game.

The rumour had circulated that her suite contained several hundred Jesuits. It contained, in fact, a single priest, who was also her secretary, and was supposed to be nothing more. The Regents, in short, were prepared to be blind, if only Christina would be discreet; but Christina would not be discreet. Her head was turned. She believed that, having come, and been seen, she had also conquered; and she decided to assert herself. Consequently she flung down her challenge by ordering the priest to say mass in the hall. He said it, and the fat was in the fire. The incident was reported; and those of the Regents and the nobility who did not want Christina in Sweden knew that they had got their handle.

They let her come a little farther. Her *cortège*, comprising 140 persons, left Helsingborg on May 18. She suffered no hardships or privations. Wherever she arrived, the people cheered her, and she found a banquet prepared—three copious banquets a day—in a splendidly decorated hall, with a canopy of state spread above the seat appointed for her. The leisurely

progress took the party, in six days, to Jonköping; her priest saying his daily mass without let or hindrance. But at Jonköping Pontus de la Gardie received a dispatch from the Regents, instructing him to tell Christina that the presence of a priest in Sweden could not be tolerated.

It was the law, and Christina knew it: a law without any schedule of exceptions, applying to priests in her suite as well as to priests in general. But she was none the less angry on that account. She no more expected the law to be enforced against her than the laws against trespassing are enforced against a landlord's personal friends. Her first impulse was to turn on her heel and go home in a temper; but Pontus de la Gardie, who was a gentleman discharging a painful duty, persuaded her to write to the King and await his answer.

The King was a boy of twelve who neither attended to, nor even opened, his own correspondence; the letter addressed, as a matter of form, to him, was really meant for the Regents. It was not a diplomatic letter, but the letter of a woman whose temper was lost beyond the hope of recovery. Christina was "much surprised," and "had never expected" to be treated in such a manner. Such civility as she had received in Sweden was only her due; and the annoyance to which she was now exposed dispensed her from the necessity of expressing any thanks for

it. She would show, by leaving the country, that she was not one of those who sacrifice their religious convictions to material advantages. And she concluded—

"I should have turned back this very evening if Count Pontus had not urgently entreated me to wait to hear again from Your Majesty, and see whether Your Majesty has not sufficient regard for me to alter his decision. Failing that, I shall no longer be able to receive any courtesies from you, but shall instantly take my departure. At the same time, in order to remind you what you are and what I am, I beg you to believe that you are not the sort of person from whom people in my position take orders.

"In spite of your singular proceedings, my brother and nephew, I remain, your good sister and aunt, C. A."

Decidedly it was the letter of a woman who, if not actually looking for trouble, was, at least, going half-way to meet it, and the trouble met her on her arrival, three days later, at Norrköping. She had intended to entertain all the members of her suite there, at a great banquet; but, before the dinner-bell had rang, Count Pontus communicated the answer to her letter. The priest, it was intimated, must not stand upon the order of his going, but must go at once. Nor must Christina herself attend mass openly

even at the house of the French Ambassador,—she might only do so if she made the excuse that she was paying a morning call,—and even that indulgence would only be extended to her for a few weeks. Naturally the proposal touched her pride to the quick.

"What!" (she exclaimed). "I to wait upon Pomponne! If he made that proposal to me himself, I would have him driven away with sticks! Yes, I would do that even in his own King's presence!"

She added that she should accept no further hospitality from the Swedish Government, but should go at once; and she proceeded to dismiss the *cortège* and demand post-horses, like an ordinary, unofficial traveller. It was with the greatest difficulty that Count Pontus, anxious, above all things, to keep up appearances, persuaded her to accept his escort to the frontier; he only succeeded in doing so by representing that the Governors of fortresses might possibly detain her if she travelled alone. Whereupon she melted, told him that the free exercise of her religion was more to her than all the crowns in the world, and invited him to supper.

At supper she drank the health of the King and the Regents,—but that toast was obviously ironical. Then she packed with the haste of a tripper who fears to miss a train, and was off,

according to her own account, "like a flash of lightning." Her indignation, when kept waiting for horses, was furious; and even the tears of her escort and the cheers of the populace only partially comforted her. The only endurable delays were those devoted to hearing the forbidden mass in defiance of authority; she only heard it, as she herself says, "to show that she was not afraid of doing so."

It was not very dignified; but, seeing that Count Pontus persisted in keeping up appearances and compelled others to keep them up, she recovered a portion of her dignity at the last. All the officers of the Helsingborg garrison escorted her to the landing-stage; and she pulled herself together, thanked Count Pontus for his courteous attentions, and gave him a suitable message to the King: "that she was too proud to complain of his treatment of her, and too deeply attached to her country to seek to avenge herself."

And so back to Hamburg, restless as ever, with nothing accomplished, but certain lessons learnt,—the chief lesson being, perhaps, that those who have eaten their cake cannot also have it. Those who accompanied her were tired to death by their exertions. Pontus de la Gardie could hardly stand on his feet. The chambermaids, "sunburnt, travel-stained, and dirty as gipsies, hardly dared to show themselves." Christina alone, invalid though she was, looked as fresh as if she had not left home. She had

depended upon those nerves of hers, and her nerves had pulled her through.

And now she had plenty of time to think things over and make up her mind what to do next.

CHAPTER XXIII

Back at Hamburg — Election of a new Pope — Christina illuminates in honour of Clement IX. — Her windows broken by the mob—The riot quelled by her suite—Further correspondence with Azzolino

CHRISTINA'S position at Hamburg continued to resemble that of the heir to a valuable, but heavily encumbered, estate, the realisation of which involves more worry than it is worth, because the task of straightening things out has to be performed in uncongenial surroundings, and looks as if it would never be finished. She was longing to be back at Rome, with Azzolino, even when she was complaining of his coldness and threatening to spend the rest of her days in Sweden; and she detested Germany and the Germans. "A stinking desert" had been her description of the country she had passed through to get to Hamburg; and now we find her speaking of "this accursed place," and declaring that the Cossacks, or any people whom her correspondent may like to name, are "rather less barbarous than the Germans." She adds, with a touch of picturesqueness, that even the mules which brought the luggage of some Italian traveller were disgusted with the German mules.

Still, though it was business which detained her at Hamburg, business did not occupy all her time and thoughts. It was only at intervals that there was any business to attend to, and she had to fill her enforced leisure as best she could: with games of chess and cards,—perhaps also with games of battledore and shuttlecock, and certainly with the quest for the philosopher's stone. It is a proof for what it may be worth of her orthodoxy, that she dropped her alchemist like a hot potato when Azzolino told her that he had been excommunicated. And that though she was on the track of a chemical solution, said to be still more potent than the philosopher's stone, invented by the chemist Glauber,—a very different composition, evidently, from the ordinary Glauber's salts!

Now and again a distinguished visitor came to see her; but such visits were not an unmixed pleasure. Standing on the threshold of Sweden like a Peri at the gate of Paradise, Christina stood firmly on her dignity; with the result that knotty problems of etiquette presented themselves. That was the case when her cousin, the sister of the Elector of Brandenburg, proposed to call, but first sent a messenger to inquire whether she would be offered a chair, and, if so, whether the chair would be an arm-chair. Christina replied that that was a concession which she could not make, as she never made it to any one, but that she

would promise not to affront her visitor by taking a seat in her presence. On that understanding the call was paid, and the two royal cousins conversed, standing, for the space of about three hours.

Another incident was supplied by the death of Pope Alexander VII., and the election of Clement IX. The new Pontiff had, as Cardinal Rospigliosi, been one of Christina's friends. He was a Cardinal of culture, and a dramatic author, who had written the *libretti* of several operas, one of which had been dedicated to Christina and performed in her honour in the Barberini Palace. Consequently, though Hamburg was a Protestant city, she resolved to give a fête to celebrate his elevation. Her fountains should flow with wine for the intoxication of the devout; and when night fell the Palace should be illuminated.

The wine was welcome; but the illuminated set-piece, — the tiara with the keys, and the inscription: CLEMENS IX. PONT. MAX. VIVAT.— was not. The mob having drunk the wine, proceeded to throw stones at the windows. The royal party was besieged, and a messenger was sent to the Governor of the town to ask for help. He replied that the disturbance was no business of his, and that he should not interfere with it. Meanwhile there was a danger of the doors being forced, and the garrison had to help itself. "The Queen had some reason to believe," runs the official account, "that it

was time for her to prepare to die"; but she was resolved that she would not die alone—

"As there seemed to be no prospect of reseue, she ordered a volley to be fired. . . . She did so because she judged, very properly, that her party was in a tight corner and must take a risk. The order was no sooner given than it was executed, with excellent results. A number of persons were killed on the spot, and several others were wounded. Then we sallied, and gave them such a fright that they all ran away."

Whereupon the Governor at last awoke to his responsibility for order, and had the street cleared; and Christina took refuge with the Swedish Resident while her own house was being repaired. The next day, she ventured into the crowd, to inspect the execution of the repairs; "and though rage and terror were visibly imprinted on the countenances of the people, no one dared to lift a hand against her." So she was very well pleased with herself, and wrote to Azzolino to say so—

"God" (she wrote) "has preserved us by a miracle. With the help of a dozen men, I withstood eight thousand,—I might even say the whole city of Hamburg. . . . The city has received a snub which it will not forget; and I flatter myself that I have worthily maintained the Pope's honour and my own. The details

will come with better grace from others than from me."

A characteristic outburst, showing us Christina's nerves in full activity: the defiant courage to which fear inspired her in paths which she was not born to tread, and her obstinate refusal to show herself ashamed of any violent deed to which fright impelled her. It was the Monaldeschi story over again, albeit with meaner victims, at whose death even the Government whose subjects they were displayed no resentment. Azzolino does not appear to have protested; but there was no special reason why he should. He did not know the facts, but only Christina's version of them,—and he did know Christina.

So the correspondence drifted back to her financial affairs and her plans. Once more it was a question whether she should or should not go to Sweden on business. It was permissible for her to go; but it was not permissible for her to take a priest with her. "I shall await your reply before making up my mind," she wrote to Azzolino; and then she stated her own views—

"The uncertainty of life alarms me; and I am afraid to take the risk of dying without confessing. Suppose I did die in Sweden, without a priest near me, would God forgive me, and should I be able to forgive myself for having

faced this peril for the sake of temporal interests which truly are not worth the anxiety which this thought causes me? It is true that I am in good health, and strong and vigorous; but might not my health fail me at any moment? A fever, a pleurisy, or any other of the many accidents to which I am liable, may easily carry off the most robust in four-and-twenty hours."

And she was not really robust, but was only pretending to be so because it suited her argument. "This accursed climate," she wrote presently, "spares no one"; and as for the German doctors—

"I would rather take advice from my horse than from them. They are beasts and ignoramuses. They kill their patients with a flegm and gravity which is worse than death itself. They know nothing whatever about my constitution or my way of life, and expect me to die whenever I am bled. It is incredible to them that one can keep alive if one drinks nothing but water."

That is one of her moods; but her moods vary. We turn a few pages of the correspondence and find her defying the very dangers which have just made her tremble. The plague, it seems, or some very similar malady, is raging in Sweden; but this time she shakes her fist in the face of the Death Angel—

"The mortality is terrible, but the fear of death shall never prevent me from doing my duty."

By doing her duty, it is to be observed, she merely means straightening out her affairs and securing the permanence of her revenues; but let that pass. She goes on to say that she refuses to be intimidated by threats to deprive her of spiritual consolation—

"I shall take my priest with me as far as I can; and if they require me to send him away, I shall obey them, and go on to Stockholm without a priest. The circumstances are not what they were on the last occasion, and I wish to show them that the pretext is not good enough to stop me if I choose to come."

Nor is the danger of pestilence the only danger which she apprehends; and she is surprised and hurt that Azzolino does not realise that fact—

"All the ruling faction in Sweden fears me and detests me; all their subjects love me and desire to have me among them. Now you can understand what are, and must be, my hopes and fears. I am feared and hated only because I am loved; and my glory and my fortune are the source of all my apprehensions. Time will teach you all these truths. I, for my

part, do not intend to speak to you of them again."

But the situation is not so simple as all that. Something that Azzolino has written has evidently pained Christina, and persuaded her, for the moment, that she is tired of life—

"I assure you that I do not value my life so much that I should hesitate to risk it on this occasion, if I were quite sure that I risked nothing else. I have lost everything which could make life agreeable to me; and, after that loss, I feel neither able nor anxious to take any trouble to protect it. In short, the day of my death will be the happiest day of my life, because it will be the last."

Whereby she pretty obviously means two things: that there is a danger for her, if she goes to Sweden, of imprisonment, as well as of assassination; and that she is persuaded that Azzolino does not love her any longer. She follows up the second branch of the subject thus—

"I will tell you, for your consolation, that the time of my return to Rome is not so close as you seem to fear. Your felicity will not be troubled by my presence for any length of time; and if I can, as I hope, overcome the power of the fatality which attaches me to Rome, I

propose to seek out a corner of the world where poverty is not a disgrace as it is at Rome, and where I shall at least have the consolation of escaping your everlasting reproaches on the subject."

But that was disingenuous, as the next passage shows. Not Christina's poverty, but her extravagance, had formed the subject of the Cardinal's reproaches—

"I shall say nothing" (she proceeds) "about my debts. I will only point out that debts are often incurred by people much richer than I am, and that I have the means of paying my debts, and intend to pay them when I can. I respect you too much to argue the point further."

Evidently she is angry; but it is not on the note of anger that she ends. Azzolino, together with his reproaches, has sent her a manuscript and asked her opinion of it. So she concludes—

"Your comedy is very fine. It is the antidote of your letters. But, alas! my troubles are real, and your only remedy for them is poetry. But that shall not prevent me from remaining yours ever until death. Adieu!"

So that we are warranted in quoting *Amantium iræ amoris integratio est*; and, meanwhile,

we have to follow Christina in the pursuit of a fresh ambition, in which she was to have Azzolino for her chief champion. Just as her restless fancy had once cherished the dream of becoming Queen of Naples, so now she dreamed, for a little while, of becoming Queen of Poland.

CHAPTER XXIV

Christina's candidature for the vacant throne of Poland—Her motives for preferring it — Presumption that Azzolino grasped at the chance of getting rid of her—Her own indifference to the result of the election—Her candidature regarded as ridiculous—Its failure

THE sovereignty of Poland was not hereditary, but elective ; and, if permitted space, one might make Polish history furnish a melancholy object-lesson on the advantages of the hereditary principle.

Any one might aspire to the throne : the meanest no less than the noblest of the Poles themselves, or some ambitious and high-handed stranger. One of the candidates, at one of the elections, was a Polish fiddler at the Russian Court ; he left his fiddling to pursue his canvass, and returned to his fiddling when the election went against him. The throne in those circumstances was not the guerdon of the fittest, but the prey of the strongest,—or the most cunning, or the most influentially backed ; and Poland was seldom ruled by a king who had served an apprenticeship to the royal craft.

Nor was the election a matter which the Poles were left to settle by themselves. Any European

potentate, from the Tsar of Russia to the Pope of Rome, might bear a hand in it, "running" a nominee, and bring both due and undue influence to bear. Poniatowski was, it will be remembered, the nominee of Catherine the Great, whose favourite he had been; and his election was largely secured by the action of Russian officers, who occupied the gallery of the hall in which the election was held, and prodded the electors with their swords. The fact that he had recently been lodged in a debtors' prison in Paris was not held to interfere with his eligibility; and the final partitioning of Poland was the principal event of his reign.

That, however, is none of our business here; we are only concerned with the election necessitated by the abdication of Christina's cousin, John Casimir.

John Casimir had been King of Poland since 1648, and was the last legitimate male representative of the House of Wasa. He might be described, in modern slang, more accurately than in any scientific definition, as "a queer customer." Before being called to the throne, he had been a Jesuit and a Cardinal, but had been absolved from his vows and permitted to marry: one of those interesting little facts which illustrate the capacity of Popes for being all things to all men, when there is anything to be gained thereby, and jettisoning principles for the sake of material advantage.

And now John Casimir's wife was dead, and

he was tired of being King of Poland, and announced his intention of retiring and reverting to the ecclesiastical estate. Louis XIV., having a candidate of his own for the vacant throne, was willing to make it worth his while to do so by presenting him with ecclesiastical benefices yielding a net revenue of 50,000 crowns. Like Christina at the time of her abdication, he wanted to live his own life in his own way ; and the kind of life which he had in mind was by no means a devout and holy life. "On this income," he cynically told the Papal Nuncio, "I shall be able to live *en galant homme*" ; and the bearing of that remark is illustrated by the stipulations which he made when Azzolino offered him a residence in the Papal States. His desiderata were, he then explained, the proximity of a monastery, plenty of good shooting, and,—*la liberté des femmes*,—free permission, that is to say, to entertain ladies even though of light reputation.

Decidedly, as we have said, a "queer customer." Poland was glad to be rid of him ; and the Pope did not want him. It was discovered, after his departure, that he had melted down the crown for pocket-money ; and the fact that the only banquets in Warsaw at which his speedy return was toasted were banquets of loose women shows us pretty clearly how the pocket-money had been spent. It is not surprising, in the circumstances, that Azzolino's offer of his country seat was withdrawn, and that John Casimir was asked to

practise his religion " elsewhere than in the Papal States."

But now the election was impending. There were already four candidates in the field : the Duke of Neuburg, the Prince de Condé, a son of the Tsar, and Prince Charles of Lorraine ; and now Christina came forward as a fifth candidate, issuing her manifesto—her election address, as it were—in the form of a letter to the Pope's Nuncio at Warsaw—

" Seeing that Her Majesty surpasses all the other candidates in nobility of birth, and perhaps also from the point of personal merit, she considers that she can offer herself as a candidate without giving offence, and ought to tempt fortune, in order to ascertain the will of God."

She went on to ask for the Nuncio's vote and interest, declaring that she could not place herself " in better hands than those of His Holiness," and telling him what to say, on her behalf, to the electors—

" That she would never have quitted the throne of Sweden, if Sweden had been a Catholic country, or if there had been any reasonable prospect of its becoming so ; that it would be unjust to prefer some stranger, less worthy of occupying the throne of her ancestors ; and that it was distinctly to the interest of Poland to choose her because, as Her Majesty was too

old to marry, had no inclination to do so, and would, in consequence, leave no heirs, their freedom of choice would be unimpeded at her death, and they would then be able to transfer their favour to any other royal house that they might prefer."

Etc. etc.; and it is curious to note that, while Christina was recommending herself to the electors on the ground that she was an old maid and intended to remain one, Azzolino was recommending her on the opposite ground that she was still young enough to marry and found a dynasty, if required,—though that consummation might, a few years before, have been prevented by "the ardour of her temperament." The comparison of the two converging lines of argument cannot have failed to interest the ecclesiastical diplomatist through whose hands they passed. His reward, if he allowed himself to be convinced by them, was to be a Cardinal's hat; but the same promise had already been made to him by one of the other candidates; and it can be no great advantage to any Cardinal to wear two hats at once.

Christina's motive in thus grasping at a crown which always brought uneasiness to the head which wore it can only be guessed at. According to some of her critics, she was the inconsistent creature of impulse; according to others, she was not in the least inconsistent, but always wanted to be a Queen, provided that she might

be a Catholic as well. Most likely the key to the mystery is furnished by the fact, abundantly established by the correspondence, that she did not press her candidature nearly so keenly as Azzolino pressed it on her behalf. He "ran" her, that is to say, and she let herself be "run." Her affection was embarrassing, and might be compromising to Azzolino; so he preferred to love her at a distance. She knew this, or, at least, suspected it, but acquiesced, being a comparatively weak woman under a comparatively strong man's influence.

So he penned a glowing testimonial to her merits, denying or ignoring all inconvenient facts. Not only did he, as we have just seen, describe her as an eligible spinster, he also justified the execution of Monaldeschi, of which both the Poles and the Nuncio appear to have disapproved; and he contradicted the statement—which we know to have been true—that she had been in receipt of a pension from the Pope. Moreover, he advertised her as an Amazon, who could sit her horse, all day long, and all night long, too, if necessary, dispensing with sleep and food. "Her courage and her martial spirit," he concluded, "are so great that she only needs an opportunity to dazzle the world with them."

One can imagine, too, the reasons with which he kept Christina herself up to the mark. She would be well provided for on the throne of Poland,—no longer obliged to roam Europe, and

hang about Hamburg, *à la recherche de la pièce de cent sous*. She would be in a position to "do something" for Catholicism,—perhaps even to promote the cause of Catholicism in Sweden. It would be gratifying to her vanity to be put forward as the Pope's nominee; and her reputation for piety would then stand in no further need of witnesses. These were arguments which appealed to her in certain moods: when she felt lonely, and poor, and bored, and restless. She did not like the idea of being beaten in any competition in which she engaged; and she did like the idea of "scoring off" masculine rivals. It also pleased her, sometimes, to picture herself, as a Queen, leading a last crusade against the Heathen Turk. But many passages in her letters show that her heart was never really in the intrigue.

She worked hard at it, indeed. She and her secretary worked all day long for days, for weeks, perhaps for months, at the composing and cipher-ing of dispatches. But it is clear that, in the main, she was only doing this to please Azzolino, in the spirit of a child performing a task. Again and again she expresses her satisfaction that he is pleased with her; again and again she lets him see her own indifference to the result of her endeavours,—or even her positive desire that they should fail. She wants to live, not at Warsaw, but at Rome; and the reason for her wish is that Azzolino lives at Rome, and not

at Warsaw. The most significant passage runs as follows :—

"HAMBURG, *August* 29, 1668.

"I have your letter of the 4th, together with the ciphers. I was pleased to perceive your zeal in this Polish business, and I thank you a thousand times for it. I send you copies of the letters I have written on the matter to the Nuncio. You will see how I meet the difficulties with regard to my sex and my marriage; but I submit my arguments to your correction."

That is quite conventional,—quite what the candidate might be expected to write to the election agent whom she trusted. But then comes the personal note,—the proof that, if Christina ever goes to Poland, she will cast longing, lingering looks behind—

"I do not know how I ought to wish the matter to turn out. More than a thousand times I have regretted having touched it; and I assure you I should be inconsolable if it succeeded; for when I reflect that, if it does succeed, I shall have to leave Rome for ever, and pass the rest of my life among a barbarous people of whose language and customs I am ignorant, the reflection distresses me terribly, and my only comfort lies in the hope that the negotiation may be broken off. I am almost inclined to complain of your zeal in the matter. Can it be that you want to get rid of me? Don't imagine that

you will be able to do that so easily. You must make up your mind to become a Pole, too, if I am elected; and, unless you are prepared to do so, all your labours are in vain, for that is the only condition on which I should accept the offer, even if the crown, not of Poland only, but of the Universe, were laid at my feet. Please let me know beforehand what your intentions are, in order that I may know what I have to make up my mind to. It is very important to me to be told."

That, beyond question, is the letter containing the key to the situation,—the proof of the battle engaged between love and friendship. Azzolino wants to be Christina's friend, and to do her a good turn as such; she wants his love, and has no ambitions to which she is prepared to sacrifice it. She does his bidding, indeed, because his is the stronger will; but she does it half-heartedly, "riding," in modern parlance, "for a fall," and never failing to end a letter with the protestation that she will be true till death, and that her one sincere desire is to be back at Rome, enjoying Azzolino's society, whether he wishes to see her or not.

Most likely her candidature would have failed even if she had not ridden for a fall. The one consideration which disposed her to press it was the desire to oblige the Pope—

"The Pope is too good to me" (she wrote).

"I cannot say how much I am obliged to him. To me personally my success is a matter of indifference; but it will be a delight to me to owe such an obligation to His Holiness. I value his favour much more than I value the crown. Please tell him so."

But the Pope did not really care,—it would seem that he was only induced to appear to care by the wire-pulling of Azzolino, whom he had made his Secretary of State. He had indeed recommended Christina to the Nuncio in a letter in which he described her as "this heroine, equally remarkable for her piety, her wisdom, and her virile courage"; but he had also sent a private injunction to the effect that no use was to be made of the letter unless Christina's success was certain. Clement IX., in short, had the wisdom of the serpent which sits coiled about the fence, ready to wriggle off on the winning side; and it was not long before he saw that the winning side was not Christina's.

For what reason the Poles would not have her is uncertain. One reason may have been that she would not promise to marry any husband whom they might select for her, but would only pledge herself not to marry without their consent; the principal reason may merely have been that they preferred some one else. The deciding scene, at any rate, was rather odd. It took place in a confession

box, where the Bishop of Posnania, who was one of the electors, besought the Nuncio to tell him, under the seal of confessional secrecy, which of the five candidates the Pope favoured. The Nuncio then, tentatively, named Christina ; and the Bishop, in reply, made many flabbergasted signs of the cross, and implored the Nuncio to keep the Pope's preference a secret, for fear lest the electoral assembly should be dissolved in laughter.

And the assembly did, in fact, jest on the subject. It would be a good idea, said some of them, if Christina were to marry a sixth candidate who had begun to be spoken of,—Don John of Austria. It would be a good match, because they were both ineligible,—she because she was a woman, and he because he was illegitimate. Then they proceeded to elect a seventh candidate,—a certain Polish Prince named Michel Korybut Wiesnowiecki, who is said to have burst into tears in his dread of the stormy prospects before him.

It did not matter. In so far as Christina had ever cared about the election, she had now ceased to care. Her dominant desire had always been to get back to Rome ; and, long before this news reached her, she had straightened out her affairs sufficiently to go there. Her letters show us clearly how anxious she was to get there, and why—

" You will soon perceive that my misfortunes

have not changed my heart. I know you will only hate me the more for that; but what am I to do? Fate wills it so. I will try to arrange matters so that my presence shall not importune you unduly. . . . I beg your pardon if you do not like what I say; but the fulness of my heart compels me to speak. Yet fear nothing. You shall have the pleasure of seeing the most unhappy woman in the world without hearing her complain of her unhappiness; and, in places in which every object reminds me of my past felicity, my only desire will be for death."

And then again, a few days later—

"I have nothing to tell you. I hope to see you soon; and I assure you that the two or three days which I am still obliged to spend here will seem to me the longest of my life, and I beg you to believe that my joy in seeing you again will be inconceivable. . . . Nothing more until the happy moment when we meet."

And finally—

"At last I am off, with all the joy of a soul escaping from purgatory; and I can only hope that my stay here will be allowed to count for a part of my sojourn in purgatory."

CHAPTER XXV

The return to Rome—Friendly relations with a cultivated Pope—The Golden Age of the Pontificate—Christina at last lives her own life in her own way—Her patronage of art and artists—Her Academy—Her benefactions

CHRISTINA desired, above all things, to be received at Rome with distinction—not merely as the personal friend of a cultivated Pope who wrote the *libretti* of operas, but as one who had "done something" for the Church during her long sojourn abroad; so she wrote letters representing that she had actually achieved the things which she had only attempted—

"My Swedish contracts are signed, sealed, and delivered. The Diet has granted me liberty for the exercise of my religion, and has ordered full satisfaction to be given to all my claims, judging that they are all just and reasonable."

"I leave here in a vainglorious spirit, having adjusted everything in such a manner as to give you satisfaction. Everything is settled in Sweden. The States have granted me all that I asked for. I am really under too great obligations to them."

Which was not even approximately true.

Christina had not obtained liberty of worship for Catholics in Sweden; and she had herself been forbidden to return to Sweden, and threatened with deprivation of administrative rights in her Swedish domains. Her interview with a certain Kleihe—a Swedish noble on whom she had herself bestowed his title—had been stormy. She had interrupted his discourse, and overwhelmed him with "unbecoming language." But she was resolved to return in a blaze of glory, even at the sacrifice of truth: hence the letters quoted. It is difficult to say whether the Pope, and Azzolino, and the other Cardinals were really, for the moment, deceived by them, or only pretended to be deceived, for their own and Christina's satisfaction. However that may have been, the blaze of glory which she desired was arranged for her.

She left Hamburg in October 1668, after a farewell banquet, escorted, for a part of the way, by the Landgrave of Hesse-Homburg, Field-Marshal Wrangel, and other persons of distinction; and she reached Rome towards the end of November. The valet whom she sent ahead to announce her approach was presented by the Pope with gold and silver medals; and His Holiness also proposed to defray the cost of her journey through the Papal States, and ordered a sumptuous banquet for her at Castel Nuovo, where twenty-four Cardinals, the Spanish Ambassador, and the Pope's nephews came to pay her their respects.

Azzolino had already met her at Narni; and her actual entry through the Porta del Popolo was made in the Pope's own carriage, followed by a train of fifty other carriages, each drawn by six horses, saluted by salvoes from the Papal artillery, and attended by light horsemen and Swiss Guards. She was driven to the Quirinal, where the Pope accorded her an audience which lasted for more than an hour.

She had not settled the business which she had started out to settle,—far from that. She had accomplished nothing for the Church, and very little for herself. Her indebtedness to Texeira had increased; and many years were still to pass before she would be able to make both ends meet. Swedish wars were to continue to interfere with the regularity of Swedish remittances. Many messengers were to be dispatched to Sweden to check or expedite the operations of her agents, and to one of her agents she was to write pathetically—

"I do wish you would either send me some money, or teach me how to live without it. Nobody pays me, but I find that everybody expects to be paid."

In a sense, therefore, Christina was still to remain for many years a Queen *à la recherche de la pièce de cent sous*, albeit now pursuing the coin by proxy. The pain of financial straits,

however,—provided that there be no actual destitution,—depends upon the importance which one attaches to them; and now, though the financial facts were pretty much what they had been for many years, Christina's sense of perspective and proportion was altered. She realised, that is to say, what were the things that mattered,—realised that not only the Kingdom of Heaven, but also the kingdom of art, literature, and culture is within us. On her return, after her long absence, to Rome, she may be said to have taken definite possession of those kingdoms.

Perhaps she did not take possession of them quite at once; certainly she did not retain possession of them quite without intermission. Her candidature for the throne of Poland had to fail before she was really free to enter into the enjoyment of any immaterial throne; and it was no doubt beneficial to her peace of mind that, thanks to the Pope's diplomatic reluctance to commit himself to any cause which was not obviously the winning one, it failed so quietly as to give no grounds for derision at the Courts of Europe. The failure left her free from a responsibility which she had never really wanted, and free also from any temptation to pretend that she had really wanted it. We need not suspect the sincerity of the congratulations which she offered to her successful rival, or of the comment which we find her addressing to the Comte de Saint-Pol—

"Had justice governed the decision, the crown would indubitably have gone to the Prince de Condé, who, of all the candidates, was the most worthy of it. Be that as it may, however, his worth and his glory may well console him for the injustice which Fortune has done him."

Nor can it be said that Christina, having obtained repose and leisure, and relief from acute pecuniary worry, altogether ceased to care for anything else. It would no longer, indeed, have been true to say of her that she had only relaxed her hold on the affairs of Sweden in order to take charge of the affairs of the universe; but she was still of too restless a disposition consistently to take the line that the affairs of the universe were no concern of hers. Just as culture was never for her solely a matter of self-realisation, so religion, even when she drew nearest to Quietism and Mysticism, was never solely a matter of attention to the admonitions of the "inward witness," or of the secret communion of the soul with God. The Old Adam (or the Old Eve) was not dead in her, though it had fallen asleep. Now and again it awoke with a start, and flashed out a spiteful sarcasm. Bishop Burnet has recalled one of these flashes, in the days of her extreme old age—

"The Church" (she said to him sardonically) "must certainly be governed by the

Holy Spirit, for since I have been at Rome I have seen four Popes, and I swear not one of them had common sense."

Christina, in short, could still quarrel, and could still intrigue; and she still found it necessary, from time to time, to defend herself. That terrible Monaldeschi affair still haunted her: her enemies never missed a chance of bringing it up against her,—only to find her hard and unrepentant. She was charged with it in the course of the Polish election, and had to justify it, even when protesting that she scorned to do so—

"The man" (she then repeated) "forced my hands, and practically compelled me to have him put to death, by the blackest treachery that a servant can display towards a master. I did not order his execution until I had convicted him of crime from letters in his own hand-writing . . . in the presence of the Prior of Fontainebleau, who heard him confess his guilt. He knows that I caused all the sacraments he could receive to be administered to him before he was executed."

The date of that defence is no less than eleven years posterior to the crime. There is more than a suggestion in it of offended ghosts paying reproachful visits in the silent watches of the night; of blood-stains often washed out, and as

often reappearing. Now, as before, the information which would have made it possible to judge the case is stubbornly withheld. We see only the struggle between pride and the pricks of conscience, and Christina keeping her secret while she drees her weird.

But that, after all, is only an intermittent, passing spectacle. Indubitably there were moments when Christina's case was like that of Lady Macbeth; but time, nevertheless, was scattering the poppies, though it did not scatter them with a sufficiently lavish hand. The Pope and the Cardinals, with whom Christina lived on such excellent terms, evoked no awkward memories. They knew no more of the precise facts than we know; very possibly they knew less. Consequently they could take what view they chose; and they naturally took the kindest possible view of the proceedings of a distinguished convert of their "set,"—influenced, to some extent, it may be, by their view of the obligations of "good form."

Perhaps, when all is said, we had better imitate them. The visits of the offended ghosts were rare and became rarer; and the note of the twenty years or so of Christina's life which have still to be surveyed is furnished neither by the echoes of an uneasy past, nor by the excitements of contemporary events. Those excitements, though they may claim a little space, only provide the background of the picture. Its actual subject is the final garnering of the

fruits of the great renunciation made so many years before. One might put it vulgarly and say that Christina at last threw care to the winds and tried to enjoy herself; but vulgar summaries mislead. A truer way of putting it will be to say that she gave herself to the realisation of those aims which she had always meant to pursue, though restlessness, ambition, and the lack of pence had too long diverted her from the pursuit. At last, that is, she would really live her own life in her own way, realising and perfecting herself with the help of culture and religion.

Culture came first, as was natural during the pontificate of a Pope who was also an opera librettist,—a pontificate which has been called, in consequence of its splendour, the Golden Age of Rome—

"Every day" (writes Arckenholtz in his description of the Papal Court) "there was some fresh spectacle to be witnessed. One day it was the reception of an Ambassador; another day, the promotion of a Cardinal; always some entertainment or other. The morning was devoted to worship and public affairs; but as soon as the dinner—a very sumptuous repast—was over, the papal party repaired to the theatre or the opera-house, or listened to a serenade by an excellent band, diversified by part songs and symphonies. . . .

"The Pope, who was generous and bene-

volent, inspired his nephews with these qualities. There was no suggestion of miserliness about those noble lords, as had been the case during some previous pontificates; on the contrary, they all lived beyond their means. . . . The ladies wore French gowns, or attired themselves as Amazons. Each of them tried to dress better than all the others, with the result that there was as much exaggerated luxury at Rome as at any of the Courts of Europe. . . .

"Public comedies were, at this time, introduced at Rome during the Carnival. A large box of extraordinary magnificence was constructed at the theatre for the Queen. It held fifteen or sixteen persons, and there were always ten or a dozen Cardinals there, keeping Her Majesty company and paying her compliments."

The only obstacle to her complete contentment was her pride, which she had not yet quite conquered. It was complained that she treated members of the aristocracy, other than Cardinals, "as if they were her domestic servants"; and she herself complained because Princess Colonna was permitted to have a box opposite to her own at an open-air entertainment—whereto His Holiness returned the soft but sarcastic answer, that as the common people were admitted to the spectacles, he did not see any reason why the nobility should be excluded from them.

That, however, though Arckenholtz makes much of it, was probably no more than a passing

Queen Christina
from a painting by Sebastien Bourdon.

fit of temper. In any case, it was only in the presence of the pride of birth that Christina herself was haughty. Where there could be no question of the pride of birth, and no opposition to her views of etiquette, as in the case of the artists and the men of letters, she was charming and could be humble. She was, in effect, the founder of the so-called Arcadian Academy, though it was not formally constituted until after her death. Its nucleus was a literary society which met at her palace "under the spiritual protection of Jesus Christ." There were fourteen members, each of whom took the name of an Arcadian shepherd; and they read each other their compositions, and discussed ethics, æsthetics, and literature. "Noble sentiments," even without noble birth, sufficed to qualify for membership; women were only eligible on condition that they "tried to write poetry"; and both mutual admiration and eulogy of Christina were formally forbidden.

It is such reachings out after the simple, but cultivated, life, that we see Christina as she would have wished posterity to see her; while her manner of bestowing benefits upon the needy had a delicacy in striking contrast with the arrogance of her attitude towards those who appeared to challenge her social status. To an Archbishop, for instance, who needed help, she wrote thus—

"I am sending you 200 ducats, which is less

than you deserve and I should like to give. But my blushes will avenge you. Say nothing about it to any one, or I shall be mortally offended."

Of her benefactions to Vincenzo da Filicaia, Crescimbeni writes thus—

"She had his children educated as if" (to quote her own words) "they were her own sons; but she did not want any one to be told, in order, as she put it, that she might not be obliged to blush at the thought of having done so little for a man whom she esteemed so highly."

And when Filicaia asked leave to express his gratitude in a eulogistic ode, she wrote—

"Pray do not think that I wanted you to praise me. Whoever put that idea into your head has done me a great wrong. You must not waste your time or your talents on me."

There are many other stories of the same sort: they all show us Christina mellowing in character as well as in wisdom. Even the Monaldeschi memory troubles her less as she gets farther away from it and covers it up with worthier memories. She seems to be getting to feel that the tragedy happened too long ago to matter—

"How ridiculous" (she is at last able to

write) "is all this nonsense about Monaldeschi! All Westphalia may believe him to have been innocent if it chooses. The opinion of Westphalia is a matter of indifference to me."

For she really had other things to think about. She was sitting with Cassini in his observatory when he discovered his comet. Her Academy took up a good deal of her time and interest; so did her library, her art treasures, and her curios. She also wrote a little,—chiefly a fragment of autobiography, and some aphorisms; and she became more spiritually minded, with a stronger tendency to mysticism. We will try to trace her mental and spiritual development, though without losing sight of the other activities which still occasionally occupied her, though they were no longer so important to her as in the past.

CHAPTER XXVI

Death of Clement IX.—The Conclave of 1669—Intrigues of Christina and Azzolino to secure the election of a friend—Their failure—A love letter in the midst of the Conclave—Election of Cardinal Altieri, who takes the name of Clement X.

THE first event which summoned Christina from contemplation to activity was the death of Clement IX., in the last days of 1669.

There was the usual mystery about his illness,—the usual optimism. It was given out that he had a cold in the head, and was expected to make a quick recovery. The fact was that, long a sufferer from hernia and stone, he had now been seized with apoplexy. The general belief was that he died of grief at the news that the Heathen Turk had taken Crete from Christendom—a view set forth in a contemporary Latin epigram—

> "Qui tumulum cernis, discas jacet in urna[1]
> Clemens; pro Creta vertitur in cinerem."

Which is credible enough. The loss of Crete may well have meant as much to Clement IX. as the loss of Calais meant to our own Bloody Mary. The island was the chief remaining outpost of

[1] Correctly copied by the writer. The first line obviously does not scan.

Christendom; its loss might well be viewed as a sign and a symbol as well as a catastrophe. Clement, as well as Christina, had dreamed of uniting the Powers of Christendom in a last Crusade, to save it. This common aspiration, no less than their common interest in art and letters, had been a link between them; and what to her had been little more than a hobby had become to him a ruling passion. He had laboured hard, in the intervals between prayers and dramatic spectacles, to overcome the reluctance of Christian potentates to compose their own feuds, in order to be free to combine against the Ottoman.

He had even begun to succeed. A "sort of" an expedition had been fitted out in France, and dispatched to the help of the Venetian defenders; but it had been withdrawn without accomplishing its task. The tide of Ottoman conquest was to roll yet farther before John Sobieski checked it under the walls of Vienna. From April until October 1669, the bells of all the churches in Rome were tolled nightly in supplication for divine aid for Crete; but towards the end of October it was made known that Crete had fallen, and the news of the Pope's illness followed hard on the heels of the announcement. He rallied, but only to turn his face to the wall, like Hezekiah, — to receive extreme unction, and bid his friends farewell.

Christina was one of those whom he sent for. "He bade her farewell," a diplomatist reported to Louis XIV., "in the most tender manner

imaginable, so that tears were drawn from her eyes." A week later, the death agony began; and then, the Camerlengo having attested the decease by tapping the dead Pope's forehead with a silver hammer, and the ring of the fisherman having been removed from his finger, the bells tolled again, bidding the people mourn, the corpse was placed on a bier, and carried through a lamenting crowd, to lie in state in the Church of St. Peter. That done, the preparations were made for the Conclave in which his successor was to be elected.

That is to say, preparations were made for locking up the Cardinals, each in a separate cell, whence they would repair, twice daily, to the Sixtine Chapel, there to record their votes, as often as was necessary, until one of the candidates secured an absolute majority of suffrages. It would be a cold, uncomfortable period, to which none could look forward with pleasure. Cardinals accustomed to luxurious palaces, warmed by blazing logs, would crouch, shivering, in their cubicles, over charcoal braziers. Cardinals who were used to fare sumptuously every day would have cold broken victuals sent in to them; and the windows of their compartments —and also of the entire palace—would be walled up, only the irreducible minimum of light and air being admitted through tiny chinks. No visitors might come to see them; and their letters would be opened and read by others.

So it had been decided by the wisdom of the

Popes of old, for very cogent reasons. It was important that the Cardinals should not be made too comfortable, in order that they might not be tempted to take too long over the election, to the detriment of the interests of the Church.[1] It was also important that they should be protected from extraneous influence, in order that they might arrive at their decision under the sole guidance of the Holy Spirit. That was the theory, though theory was often at loggerheads with practice, and the prayers which the electors offered for guidance were apt, in spite of all precautions, to be a mixed incense, sadly contaminated by intrigue. It might be, of course, that the Holy Spirit overruled intrigue, and brought good out of it; but the ways of the electors—and of the Powers behind the electors —were invariably devious. It was to be so now.

Character and virtue, of course, counted for something in the choice of the electors, and were beginning to count for more in the seventeenth century than at some previous dates. We hear of two Cardinals regarded as ineligible—one because he was notoriously the father of a large family, the other because he was in the habit of fuddling himself in taverns. Age, however, was, on the whole, a more valuable asset to a candidate than piety, for the older the Pope chosen, the sooner there would, in all human probability, be a fresh Conclave and a fresh chance for the

[1] The rule was made after an election which had lasted more than two years.

rejected. A colourless politician, again, was regarded as preferable to a partisan; for the Spanish faction objected to the partisans of France, and the French faction objected to the partisans of Spain. And there were also, of course, personal considerations. The new Pope, whoever he might be, would have patronage to distribute; he would be able to make things comfortable for his friends and uncomfortable for his enemies. Consequently every one concerned, whether directly or indirectly, with the election—the Powers, and the Ambassadors of the Powers, as well as the Cardinals themselves—wished to be able to boast, on the day of the declaration of the poll, of a share of the "glory" of having "made" whatever Pope was chosen.

Such was the atmosphere of the election,—an atmosphere which was anything rather than spiritual. The problem for every one concerned was, not merely to secure the election of a friend, but also to avoid estranging any candidate who had any serious chance of success. Azzolino was not one of those who had a serious chance,—his age was against him, for he was only forty-seven; but he was, none the less, materially as well as spiritually, interested in the result. As a good churchman—the creature neither of France nor of Spain—he desired an independent Pope, who would hold the scales impartially between those two Powers. As an individual, he desired a Pope who would retain him in the office of Secretary of State. Azzolino, that is to say, proposed to

help the Church and to help himself at the same time; while Christina proposed to help the Church, and at the same time to help Azzolino.

But not too openly, for that might be fatal to success. Nobody must be allowed to know what they were doing—or, at all events, how they were doing it. Above all, they must not alarm the opposition by showing their hands, or naming their favourite, too soon. In short, like other conspirators, they must dissemble; and, if they could not dissemble without trifling with the truth, then they must trifle with it, as Christina, in fact, began to do, in a very artistic manner, very soon after the See fell vacant. Cardinal Vidoni was their first choice; and Christina, therefore, took care to be overheard saying, as he passed in a procession: "Well, he, at any rate, isn't likely to be our new Pope."

That was the first stroke of craft, symbolical of many. Another consisted in securing free communication with Azzolino at a time when he was supposed to be excluded from all influences save that of the Holy Spirit. Christina hired, to that end, a palace within the radius reserved for ecclesiastical proceedings, so that her messengers might be able to go to and fro without being perpetually called upon to show passes and answer questions. She had an office fitted up there, for the dispatch of business; and there was a garden from which she could look up at the window of Azzolino's cell. The window, of course, was boarded up in com-

pliance with the regulations; but just as stone walls do not make a prison, so boards are no barriers to sentiment.

The details of the intrigues—the personalities involved in them—can no longer matter to any human being. All that continues to be interesting after the lapse of time is the manner and the temper in which they were conducted —the hypocrisy and humbug,—the mixture of worldliness and other-worldliness which seems to be inevitable when the possession of a spiritual office brings temporal advantage. The note of it all is the conjunction of prayer with low cunning; the competitors fighting for the fisherman's ring as dogs fight for a bone, —but not so fairly. For dogs, at least, cannot lie and pretend that they do not want the bone; whereas the Cardinals and their backers were as double-faced as they were combative.

The general idea was that Christina should pull the wires outside the Conclave while Azzolino pulled them within; that she should drop dark hints, conveying the impression that he was the Pope-maker, while he increased the value of his support by withholding it until the eleventh hour, and then wheeled into line with Vidoni's open supporters. It was also important to persuade both France and Spain that Vidoni was their man, but that they could not secure his election without Azzolino's help. To that end, Christina held many mysterious receptions in her palace, and reported progress

in many confidential notes,—some of them, it is said, smuggled into the Conclave on plates of broken victuals.

There were love letters, as well as business letters, among them. Imagine this note dropping into the midst of a conference of cardinals, communing with each other under divine guidance—

"What happy influence induced you to give me, once again, the glorious symbols of my past happiness? Am I mistaken? Do those initials 'S.M.' no longer mean all that they used to mean? If I could only make you understand the delight which the sight of them gave me, you would adjudge me, in some degree, worthy of this title which I prefer to that of Queen of the Universe. But I must be unworthy of it, since you have deprived me of it. Do as you think best. My own behaviour is such that you will never be able to doubt, without injustice and terrible cruelty, that 'S.M.' is due to me."

It is enigmatic; but the allusion is obviously to some pet name bestowed upon the Queen in old times by her Cardinal lover. It is obvious, too, not only that she had once loved him, but that she still loved him, whether he still loved her or not. The expression of the sentiment may have been out of place at such a holy time; but it gives the key to her proceedings.

Much as she loved intrigue for its own sake, she loved her partner in intrigue still better; and therefore she intrigued with a whole heart, ceasing to live her own life in order to live his, and allowing no scrupulous regard for truth or honesty to hamper her endeavours. One must not even say that the greater advantage of Azzolino was more to her than the greater glory of the Church,—she loved too well to draw any subtle distinction between the two things.

But she intrigued in vain; and once more the details do not matter. One may simply sum them up by saying that Christina and Azzolino were, as vulgar people say, "too clever by half." Other people as well as they were intriguing; and these other people intrigued more adroitly. The upshot was that, after the Conclave had lasted four months and ten days—after Christina had written Azzolino one hundred and twenty-three letters on the subject—all the "popable" Cardinals who wanted to be Pope were set aside, and the choice fell, almost unanimously, upon an aged Cardinal who protested that he was unworthy of the honour, wept at the prospect of its imminence, and implored his insistent supporters not to vote for him, but to let him die in peace: the octogenarian Cardinal Altieri.

Even after his election Altieri continued to protest. His colleagues had to argue a whole hour with him before he consented to accept

the honour, and then practically to force the tiara on to his head. At last, however, he yielded, and took the name of Clement x.; and when the barriers which protected the Conclave were struck down, Christina, who had worked so hard for more than one of his rivals, was the first to enter and kiss his feet. Perhaps she was glad that the struggle was over, and that she was once more free to give herself to art, literature, and religion.

CHAPTER XXVII

Death of Clement x.—Accession of Innocent xi.—A reforming Pope—Christina's quarrels with him—Her objection to his sumptuary laws—Her insistence upon the right of asylum for law-breakers in the precincts of her palace—The Pope's commentary on her conduct—*E donna*

The accession of Clement x. made little difference to anybody. It was his Court's fault, not his, that Christina was unceremoniously received when she first called to pay her respects. He himself was just a colourless, amiable old man, chiefly anxious, as he announced, to be allowed to depart in peace, and neither a reformer nor an innovator. The loss of Crete to Christendom did not worry him,—nothing worried him; and nothing in particular happened until, in 1676, he slept with his fathers, and was succeeded by Cardinal Odescalchi, who reigned as Innocent xi.

But then it was as if King Log had been succeeded by King Stork, or as if a jolly Prince of Wales had put away jollity, and become a strenuous King whose little finger was thicker than his father's loins. Cardinal Odescalchi had danced assiduous attendance on Christina in her box at the opera; but

Innocent XI. was a reforming Pope, bent upon sweeping out Augean stables and enacting sumptuary laws, without regard for the feelings of those whom they inconvenienced. Passages of arms between him and Christina were inevitable; and they had several,—first about small matters, and afterwards about great ones. Culture was much to Christina, and so was religion; but the getting of her own way was more than either. Only on condition that she got her own way could she behave quite like a Christian philosopher.

First of all, the sumptuary laws caused trouble. Innocent required some alterations which Christina did not like in the construction of her royal box; he objected to the appearance of actresses, introduced by her, on the public stage; he also said his ecclesiastical say on the extravagance of feminine apparel. But that is a path full of pitfalls for ecclesiastical reformers; and Christina had sufficient sense of humour to "guy" the exhortations of her Father in God, in the very act of obeying them. When he called upon her, she made the feminine members of her household parade before him—all of them attired as the most outrageous "frumps." The Roman world then talked of "monkey tricks"; and Innocent XI. was not too pious a man to lie low, saying nothing, but awaiting his chance of "getting," as vulgar people say, "a little of his own back again."

That chance came with the revival of Chris-

tina's zeal for the discomfiture of the Heathen Turk, and her appeal to the Pope to help the good cause with a subsidy. He promised to do so, and did so; and Christina, magnanimously deciding that bygones might now be bygones, overwhelmed him with eloquent applause. But then, when the last echoes of the panegyric had died away, she learnt that His Holiness had suppressed her own pension, and devoted it to the noble purpose. Truly it was a stroke worthy of the Pope of whom Bishop Burnet, then travelling in Italy, wrote that "he hath a particular stiffness of temper, with a great slowness of understanding, and an insatiable desire of heaping up wealth." Christina pretended to be pleased; but her manner of expressing her pleasure shows that she was furiously angry.

The news, she told Azzolino, was "most welcome"; she begged him to do her the justice of believing her when she said so. God was her witness that she spoke the truth—

"The acceptance" (she continued) "of the twelve thousand crowns which the Pope gave me was the one blot on my life. I only accepted it as a mortification inflicted by the hand of God in order to humiliate my pride. His gracious goodness in taking it away from me in circumstances of such glory proves that I have found favour in His eyes. This is His reward for the poor services which He has permitted me to render Him. The favour is worth more to me

than a thousand kingdoms ; and I pray to God to preserve me from the vanity which I might naturally feel in it. Would that a hundred thousand crowns a month could be taken from me, so that my merit in rejoicing might be greater ! "

E donna : the famous criticism is as well justified by that outburst as by any other ; and Christina's final period may, perhaps, be best described as one of culture and Quietism diversified by explosions. At any rate, one's attempts to dwell upon the Quietism are continually disturbed by the noise of the explosions ; and not all of the explosions are creditable to her. One has to picture her " in opposition," convinced that the function of an Opposition was to oppose, and therefore always—at least when she awoke from her Quietism—against the Pope's Government, whether that Government was right or wrong ; and, as the reign of Innocent XI. was known as the Age of Iron—in contrast to the Age of Gold under Clement X.—the opportunities of conflict were frequent.

One of Christina's ruling passions blazed up over the question whether Del Monte, her Master of the Horse, should be addressed as " Excellency." Over that question she fought the Ambassadors as well as the Sacred College,—but fought them unsuccessfully in spite of the help she got from Azzolino's persuasive tongue ; and her defeat in that battle of etiquette—a defeat which amounted to a snub—may have been one

of the influences which hardened her heart. It was hardened, at all events, not only against the Pope's zeal for persecution, but also against his zeal for the reform of the Roman administration. Not only did she express herself "like a Fury" over the imprisonment of her friend, the Quietist Molinos; not only did she try in vain to save the lives of heretics condemned to death; she also fought the Pope over her claim to afford sanctuary to malefactors in her palace and its precincts.

That privilege was one which she shared with the Ambassadors of the Powers. It had never been formally accorded to her; but she had assumed it, and it may be said to have been hers by prescription. The trouble lay, not so much in the privilege itself, as in the extensive application given to it. It was reasonable enough that the residence of an Ambassador should be regarded as extra-territorial, and that his suite should be immune from arrest; but the extension of the privilege to the precincts, and to any one who chose to take refuge within them, was another matter. That meant a Rome bristling with Alsatias which might serve as refuges and bases of operations for the criminal classes. Innocent XI., as a reforming Pope, resolved to put an end to the abuse, and to restrict the right of sanctuary to the palaces and to the members of the ambassadorial households.

That, again, was reasonable: there was no reason why both the Ambassadors and Christina should not agree. Christina, in fact, began by

agreeing with a characteristic flourish of trumpets. The Pope's proposal, she wrote, struck her as "very just," and she willingly made him a present of a privilege, never abused, freely granted to her by his predecessors, reserving to herself only the right to protect her personal attendants; and she went on in the fine style of one who likes to perform a magnanimous act magnanimously—

"I confess that I am only offering to cede a right which already appertains to Your Holiness. But, then, we can offer God Himself nothing but what He has given us; and God not only accepts such offerings, but rewards them, in His infinite goodness, with immeasurable and eternal benefits. For my own part, I ask nothing from Your Holiness, but only beg Your Holiness to accept the offering of an example which perhaps will not be without its utility to the Holy See."

That meant, of course, that Christina desired the credit of giving a "lead" to the Ambassadors; and, if the Ambassadors had followed her lead, all would have gone well. Unfortunately, though some of them were willing to follow it, the Ambassador of the King of France was too proud to do so, saying haughtily that he was accustomed to set precedents, not to be guided by them. The Pope then excommunicated him; and he did not seem to mind. And his refusal made, of course, a difference to Christina.

It made the more difference to her because the Pope, instead of graciously saluting her as a model daughter of the Church, accepted her surrender of her privileges as a matter of course, and proceeded, without any excess of ceremony, to take her at her word. Nothing more was needed to make her change her mind, without even giving notice of her intention to change it, and to complain of "barbarous treatment" when the Papal police began to violate the right of asylum which she had abandoned. Hence a row,—for the vulgar word is the most applicable: we will summarise the story.

There was a certain wine and spirit merchant who was "wanted" by the police. They caught him in a church; but he escaped from them and ran into the precincts of Christina's palace, hoping to take sanctuary in the coach-house. Finding the coach-house door fastened, he clung to the padlock; but the police threw a rope round his neck and pulled it. He had to let go in order to avoid being strangled; and his shouts brought a crowd of sympathisers, who also filled the air with indignant roarings—

"How barbarous! What tyranny! What disrespect to God and to the Queen!"

It happened on Easter Sunday, during church time. Christina, coming out of church, heard what had been done. She listened to the

story, meditated in silence for a few minutes, and then exploded—

"No" (she said). "I might hush this matter up, but I shall not. The Pope is treating me too badly; and I shall take this opportunity of showing him that he is mistaken if he expects me to put up with such treatment."

Whereupon she sent some of her guards after the police agents to release the prisoner. The police agents, accustomed to respect royal Alsatias, were so frightened at what they had done, that they not only let the man go, but begged, on their knees, that their own lives might be spared. The Roman populace applauded, and even the Cardinal-Governor took Christina's part. An official sent to see her on the subject brought back an unsatisfactory reply, saying that Christina had "spoken to him as a Queen," telling him that what had been done had been done by her orders, that she took the full responsibility for it, and was quite prepared to do it again under the same provocation.

It was the Pope's turn. He took criminal proceedings against the guards who had interfered with his police, had them condemned in absence, and their condemnations and sentences placarded on the walls of Rome. Whereupon Christina, who was sheltering them in her palace

from the execution of the judgment, wrote a furious letter to the President of the Tribunal—

"So you call this doing justice! You dishonour yourselves and your master. I am sorry for you, and I shall be still more sorry for you when you are a Cardinal. Meanwhile I promise you that those whom you have condemned shall not, by God's grace, die yet awhile, and, if they do die any but a natural death, they shall not die alone."

One can almost hear the stamp of the foot which must have accompanied that explosion; one can easily picture the domestic demonstration which ensued,—the members of Christina's household assembled and harangued. She was charged, she told them, of fomenting sedition against the Pope, whereas, as they knew, nothing was farther from her thoughts. Gladly would she protect them if she could,—no fears for herself should hinder her from doing so; but she was a poor weak woman, persecuted by a fierce despotic man. For their own sakes, they had better leave her,—she proposed to dismiss them for their good.

Whereupon, of course, they took up their cue, and played their own proper parts in the demonstration, falling upon their knees with streaming eyes, and protesting, with choking voices, that they would never desert their mistress, but begged leave to continue to live

in her service, and, if need were, to die in it, defending her with the last drop of blood in their veins. Whereto she assented, declaring that she feared God, but feared nothing else in the world, and would rather die a thousand deaths than submit to the indignities put upon her. And then, by way of showing that she meant what she said, she walked abroad, taking with her those members of her suite whom the Pope had presumed to condemn,—a fine act of bravado which the Roman populace did not fail to applaud.

So the quarrel raged; and presently, as was proper in a quarrel between high potentates, there was a formal exchange of diplomatic notes, embodying qualified apologies and retractations. Christina said that she was sorry if she had unintentionally given offence, but that she expected that the Pope, while pardoning her, would give strict orders that she should be treated more respectfully in the future, as she would rather die than submit to such affronts. Innocent XI. replied that he was much impressed by this spectacle of edifying humility on the part of a person of exalted station, and that he would take care that Christina was treated with all the respect that was due to her; but he added that, as a sovereign Prince, he had the right to punish crime, whoever the criminal might be, and that he expected the Queen herself to punish any members of her suite who misbehaved, and dismiss them if they persisted in their misbehaviour.

It was his way of intimating that, while he insisted on his rights in principle, he would let this particular assertion of them lapse. Christina still desired a more complete satisfaction, and the last word in the controversy; but she got neither, and Innocent XI.'s final attitude towards her reminds one of that of a chivalrous Home Secretary towards a militant suffrage-seeker whose bombs do not go off. She made a further demonstration, paying a defiant visit to the Jesuit Church, once more attended by the offenders whom she had challenged the Pope to arrest if he cared first to pass over her dead body. Instead of attempting to pass over her dead body, he sent her a present,—several baskets of the most delicate fruits in season. And then occurred the famous exchange of pleasantries—

"The Pope needn't think," said Christina, "that his presents are going to lull my suspicions. On the contrary, I shall be more on my guard than ever."

"*E donna*—she is a woman, and she behaves as such," was the rejoinder of Innocent XI.; and it is said to have caused Christina more annoyance than any of his previous acts or utterances.

Nor was even that the last of Christina's tussles with her spiritual father. The vexed question of the right of asylum came up again, a little later, in connection with the case of a

lady who had escaped from a nunnery and besought Christina to shelter her; and the Pope once more raged furiously, but raged in vain. One does not know the rights of the case; but, even without knowing them, one is disposed to take Christina's side. The "doubtful reputation" of the lady, whom Christina promoted to be her chambermaid, is neither here nor there; for the use of convents as places of penal detention is an obnoxious ecclesiastical abuse. There had once been a question, in the reign of Alexander VII., of sending Christina herself to a convent; and the memory of that menace may now have fortified her obstinacy. In any case, it is difficult to withhold sympathy from her bold statement that, if the Cardinal who demanded the surrender of the fugitive had not been a personal friend, she would have had him thrown out of the window.

But that is our last story of the disturbing storms. Most likely they fill a space in her biographies which is out of all proportion to their importance. They furnish incident; and incident naturally looms larger in narrative than the mere spiritual progress of the inner life. Nevertheless it is true that the greatest events take place in the intellect,—and in the heart; and it is to the ultimate mellowing of Christina's character, and her gradual realisation of the profounder truths of her religion, that our last chapters must be devoted.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Christina's last years—Bishop Burnet's description of her—Her Aphorisms — Platitudes commingled in them with individual thoughts — Aphorisms about love — And about religion—Do the Aphorisms convey the truth concerning her affection for Azzolino?

CHRISTINA, in these latter years of her life, was "very small, fat, and round, with a double chin, and a laughing air, and very obliging manners." That is the excellent Bishop Burnet's description; and he fills in the background of his portrait thus—

"At the Queen of Sweden's one learns all the news relating to Germany or the North. This Princess, who will always reign among those who are endowed with wit and learning, keeps up in her antechamber the finest Court of strangers in Rome. The civility and great diversity of matters furnished by her conversation makes her among all the rare sights of Rome the rarest, not to say among all the antiquities, which is the term she made use of in doing me the honour to speak to me."

She, further, did Burnet the honour of speaking to him in epigrams. It was to him that she

addressed the gibe which discovered in the divine governance of the Church the excuse for railing at its earthly governors. It has been given already, but it may be given again—

"The Church must certainly be governed by the Holy Spirit, for since I have been at Rome I have seen four Popes, and I swear not one of them had common sense."

Thus including in a common condemnation the Popes who had taken her seriously because she was a Queen, and the Pope who had refused to take her seriously because she was a woman and behaved as such.

But Burnet's picture, of course, was only of externals. He saw a merry woman who was also wise; a wise woman who was also merry. He saw, that is to say, what he was allowed to see; and it may even be that he saw a time-honoured institution rather than a breathing and palpitating individual. He certainly did not try to solve the riddle of Christina's personality; and he probably did not perceive that there was any riddle to be solved. But there was a riddle, and perhaps still is one: a riddle which would be bafflingly insoluble if one insisted that the solution must smooth out all the inconsistencies and find a formula to reconcile them.

E donna was the Pope's formula. Miss Taylor, in her interesting monograph, seems disposed to adopt it. But it will not do. To say

of Christina that she was a woman and behaved as such may, indeed, help us over some of the stiles, as it has been made to do in the course of this biography ; but it does not help us over all of them. As well might one try to sum up Napoleon by saying : " He was a man—so what else could you expect ? " Napoleon is interesting, not because he resembled other men, but because he differed from them. Christina, similarly, is interesting, not as a representative, but as an unrepresentative woman,—one of whom it could be said, in general, though not always in particular, that " none but herself could be her parallel."

One may say, if one likes, that Christina was a true woman in stamping her foot at the Pope, and defying him, with the full assurance that he would be too chivalrous to use the full measure of his strength against her. One may also say that she was a true woman in first tossing away her crown and then trying to pick it up again, and in insisting with an infuriated obstinacy upon the social prerogatives of her royal rank after she had relieved herself of its responsibilities. But one must not conclude that to say that is to say all. It still remains impossible to pick a woman at random from among one's acquaintances—or even a woman who appears to one to be particularly womanly—or particularly clever, or particularly wayward—and picture her in Christina's place, doing exactly what Christina did. Christina's individuality forbids.

Some, perhaps, instead of individuality, would say genius ; but that is an appreciation not to be too lightly risked. The temperament of genius Christina no doubt possessed ; but if she had had the genius itself, as well as the temperament, she would either have succeeded in life, or at least have left some memorable monument of her failure. As a matter of fact, she failed in life, largely through never knowing exactly what it was that she wanted ; and the literary memorials of her disappointments in the endeavour to find happiness by living her own life in her own way lack the stamp which assures the title to immortality. Her Autobiography is not one of the world's great Autobiographies. Her Sentiments —or Aphorisms—are not to be compared—to cite another royal author—with the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius.

Yet it is to those Aphorisms—put on paper at Rome during the later years of her life—that one inevitably turns to ascertain what she herself considered that she had made of her life, and what was her conclusion of the whole matter after experience had taught her all that it had to teach. They are the Aphorisms, be it remembered, of a woman brought up in circumstances analogous to those of a brilliant Girton girl whose home was in a remote provincial and Philistine centre ; a woman who, esteeming culture above all things, had sacrificed a kingdom for its sake ; a neurotic woman who had passed through many nerve-storms, sighing for

peace, but too often seeking it where it was not to be found, because she sighed for notoriety as well as peace; a woman who had loved a Cardinal, and had always professed the belief—though she had by no means always acted on it—that religion was, after all, the only thing that mattered. Truly, therefore, when she took her pen in hand, and sat down to put herself and her inmost soul into a book, she had a theme well worthy of genius. What did she make of it?

She made very little of it; and that for reasons which it is not very difficult to penetrate.

That she was an amateur does not matter: Marcus Aurelius was also an amateur. So was Bunyan; so was William Law; so was Saint Augustine. For intimate writing, spiritual experience counts for a vast deal more than the experience gained by the composing of many books. To those who have the other gifts, the gift of style is often added, as if by divine endowment. But there is also needed either excess of self-consciousness, or else a total lack of it; concentration and mental detachment. It was on that side that Christina was defective. Her life had, indeed, been an agitated pilgrimage towards a Land of Beulah; and there were evidently moments when she was fully persuaded that she had reached her destination, and found peace and content.

But she had not. The habits of agitation and quarrelsome excitement still clung to her;

and the struggle with them persisted almost to the last. Sometimes she worsted them; but sometimes they worsted her. If her home was in the Land of Beulah, she was rather too fond of leaving home. We have seen her issuing from her spiritual seclusion in order to stand upon her dignity, and in order to wrangle with the Pope. She also tried to double the incompatible parts of religious mystic and fashionable hostess; and one can see the result of the consequent spiritual confusion in her writings, as well as in her actions, —in her formal Aphorisms, as well as in her informal correspondence. Alike of the Aphorisms and of the Letters one can make anything, according to the passages one chooses to select.

The Aphorisms begin as a colourless manifesto of ordinary orthodoxy. Just like any Jesuit theologian, Christina deduces the entire body of Catholic doctrine from the intuitive initial proposition that "there is, beyond question, a God who is the unique source and the ultimate end of all things." The infallibility of the Pope who had no "common sense," and whom she was always defying because he was disrespectful and treated her demonstrations as tantrums, seem to her to follow inevitably from that comprehensive premiss. "One is rightly amazed," she says, "to find persons professing and calling themselves Christians who have their doubts about this visible Head of the Church." The only possible comment

is : Perhaps ; but why trouble to say so, seeing that the proposition is common to all the Catholic manuals ? It is not exactly a platitude ; but it prepares us for platitudes to follow. And platitudes do follow—and follow quickly—

" Nothing that is not honourable is useful."

" It is better to deserve good fortune than to possess it."

" I have the greatest admiration for the character of Alcibiades."

" Even if God did not reward virtue, one ought to practise it for its own sake."

" A prince should love the brave, but should detest the boastful and the brutal."

" There is no rule without its exception ; our judgment should guide us in doubtful cases."

" Civility and kindness are becoming even to the great."

" Nothing is more pernicious than idleness."

" Economy is necessary ; but it should be noble and not sordid."

And so forth, and so forth. Again and again, on page after page, we find Christina

rediscovering the obvious. Most likely it is a weakness for which her royal rank and the compliments of her Court of flatterers account. In every mind there is dross commingled with the gold; and those who have only courtiers for critics are the least to be trusted to separate the alloy from the precious metal. That is why kings and queens, even when clever, as they very often are, tend to think that, because truisms are true, therefore to be platitudinous is to be profound, and that even the headings of the copy-book need to be sanctioned by their approbation. Christina evidently thought so; and one would hardly have been surprised if one had found among her Aphorisms the "awful and inexorable saying" that there are milestones on the Dover Road.

Yet she is clearly superior to her platitudes even when she utters them. If they are included in her stock of wisdom, they do not constitute the whole of it. If she does not know better, at any rate she knows more; and the personal note is never quite drowned by the commonplaces. She has her individual views, for instance, on the subject of love and marriage—

"Every woman who wants to enjoy herself needs a husband; she cannot do without one."

"Women only marry in order to acquire greater liberty. They would rather have aged husbands than none at all."

" One needs more courage to expose oneself to the evils of marriage than to those of war. I marvel at the intrepidity of those who marry ; but this terrible contract is currently entered into without consideration of its importance or of the engagements to which it commits one."

" Socrates said : ' Whether you marry or do not marry, you will regret it.' For my own part, I believe that any man who marries will infallibly regret it ; but I do not see why any one should regret having remained single. Experience makes me a judge of that."

" I have the highest respect for those who are chaste through virtue ; but those who are chaste only because their temperaments are cold are never good for anything."

The virtues of which one writes that one " admires " them are usually the virtues which one does not consistently practise. Perhaps, therefore, one may infer something from this last sentiment as to the practice of the Queen who indubitably loved Cardinal Azzolino. Perhaps one can infer it the more surely because there are traces of a jealousy subsisting between Christina and a certain Princess whom the Cardinal had loved before he met her. Whether, on the other hand, she would have changed her mind about marriage if it had been permissible for Cardinals to marry is more than one may dare

to guess. It is, at any rate, clear that her hostility to marriage was equalled by her enthusiasm for love, and that, though she thought of love mainly as a communion of souls, she also understood and appreciated its more passionate aspects—

"Sensual enjoyment is not necessary to the existence of love; but it is almost an essential to one's perfect happiness."

"Love is possible without possession; but complete happiness is not."

"When the hope of sensual enjoyment has to be abandoned, one suffers terribly; but still one continues to love."

There again, of course, one is tempted to draw inferences. The utterances are not those of a woman without "temperament"; but they are the utterances of a woman to whom her temperament was by no means everything. What Christina has written is what one would have expected her to write if one knew for certain that Azzolino's original sensual passion for her had, at some stage of their relations, been transformed into a purely spiritual passion,—and that a little before she wished it. We have already seen letters, written during her long absence from Rome, which pointed to the same conclusion. It is the conclusion, therefore, to which

all the ascertainable probabilities agree in pointing.

But Christina's conception of love, though it had nothing to do with marriage, was a high one. Disappointment did not tempt her to be untrue; and spiritual love became more and more satisfying to her—

"The unique purpose of love is to love and to be loved. It makes no other claim."

"Love embellishes the beloved object, and makes it more and more worthy of love with every passing hour; but the love of those who do not know how to love is madly importunate."

"Fidelity in love is not so much a merit as a necessity. It is the touchstone which distinguishes the true love from the false."

"True love is chaste. Nothing pleases it, and nothing moves it, except the beloved object."

"Absence does not destroy true love; and time, which destroys everything else, has no power over it."

And love, in Christina's view, is not only a kind of religion, but also a part of religion, or, at least, a stepping-stone thereto—

"When a heart is capable of loving, it is

impossible that it should not, sooner or later, come to love God, who alone is capable of bringing all its desires to fulfilment."

It is difficult to doubt that these scattered short sentences are, indeed, the veiled confession of the truth, and that those who read between the lines can really read the principal secret of Christina's life.

Undoubtedly she began life with that vague dread of marriage—and of passions which might be more ardent than her own—which is not uncommon among intellectual women. When she threw away her crown, in order to be free to live her own life, it was mainly a life of intellectual vanity which she proposed to lead. Though religion had something to do with her decision, she was hardly to be called religious. But she was human, and became more human as the years passed over her head; and the living of her own life, according to her own programme, was more difficult than she had expected it to be. She sighed for the common lot,—and love was a part of it. She found love, and found that it was the only thing that mattered except religion. It did not interfere with religion, but, on the contrary, made her feel more religious than she would have felt without it.

It would be easy enough to be censorious or cynical: easy to say that this was a queer outcome of an illegitimate passion for a worldly Prince of the Church, who had sworn vows of

chastity and continually violated them. But queer things happen, alike to lovers and to the religious; and it would be just as reasonable to quote: "The wind bloweth where it listeth," and "God moves in a mysterious way." The fact is clear that love and religion did, in Christina's case, go hand in hand; and that though her love was for a Cardinal who was supposed to be a celibate, and her religion was compatible with the frequent scolding of the Pope.

CHAPTER XXIX

More Aphorisms—The light which they throw on Christina's life—Her mysticism—Her indifference to death—Extracts from her later correspondence — Her last illness — Her reconciliation with the Pope, and her death

We have seen how Christina, in her old age, defined her attitude towards love ; we must see, in conclusion, how she defined her attitude towards religion. Sometimes, as we have already seen, she regarded the two things as two modes of the same activity,—or of the former as the surest stepping-stone on which a woman could rise to the latter. But not always,—in this, as in other matters, she was apt to be inconsistent, and alternately conventional and unconventional. Just as her worldly wisdom is, at its lowest, on a level with the proverbial philosophy of Martin Farquhar Tupper, so her spiritual ecstasies are, at their lowest, determined by the rules laid down in the stock manuals of faith and religion. She can write like a conventional sinner, and also like a conventional saint—

"The passions are the salt of life. One is only happy or unhappy in proportion as one does them violence."

That is in the tone of the tired cynic, disillusioned and disabused. But we turn a page or two, and then we read—

"The goodness and the felicity of God are the justest and worthiest subjects of our joy and consolation. If God had only created us as brands to be burned eternally in hell, He would none the less deserve our love and adoration."

The contrast is as glaring as if we set a sentiment by Byron side by side with a sentiment by Legh Richmond or Charles Haddon Spurgeon. The sentiments represent the two alternating moods of the woman who had aspired to reach the Land of Beulah, and had reached it, but was continually popping in and out instead of staying there. There are also sentiments which illustrate the transition from the one mood to the other—

"To be completely happy in this world and in the next, we must dispense with everything except God.

"Nothing can fix the affections of our hearts: it is only in God that they find peace."

That is the goal; and then we get an indication of the progress towards the goal—

"There are some hearts so fortunately born and so happy that they have never set their affection on anything but God; there are others

which only arrive at the love of God after everything else has disgusted them. The former are enviable; the latter are less fortunate. But it is better to love God late than never."

But it would seem, in spite of the inconsistencies, that there was progress, and that Christina's hopes and thoughts were gradually fixed less and less on life, and more and more on death. There are indications, indeed, that the Monaldeschi horror still haunted her almost to the last: that she still remembered it, long after others had ceased to remind her of it; that, though she continued to justify her action in public with a brazen face, the verdict finally delivered by the tribunal of her own conscience was one of condemnation—

"One never repents of having pardoned offences; one always repents of having punished them, however just the punishment may have been.

"A great heart cannot exact vengeance when it is weak, and ought not to exact it when it is strong.

"One should only avenge oneself by conferring benefits; any other kind of vengeance, however just, is unworthy of an heroic soul."

And then again, on another page—

"It is better to pardon the guilty than to punish the innocent.

"One ought to pardon every man who confesses his fault and surrenders at discretion."

And finally—

"Every crime is a rude penance for him who has committed it. . . .

". . . Where our own actions are concerned, it is much easier to deceive others than to deceive ourselves."

It was an old story—thirty years old, perhaps, at the time of writing—of which these sentiments evoke the memory; but there can be no doubt as to their reference to it. There is no other story in Christina's life to which they are applicable; and though they are so buried away in the midst of mixed aphorisms that their significance might easily be missed—and, indeed, has been missed by the majority of Christina's biographers—the source of their inspiration is unquestionable. Conscience was speaking at last. It spoke at intervals, if not continuously. The ghost had risen, and the weird had to be dreed. The appeal for pity on the day on which terror had excluded pity, and the piercing shrieks of the death agony recurred and rang in the ears of her who had ordered the execution. The world had forgiven and forgotten; but—one may repeat the words—

"Every crime is a rude penance for him who has committed it. . . .

" . . . Where our own actions are concerned, it is much easier to deceive others than to deceive ourselves."

Of a truth Christina must have needed all her mysticism to face death calmly with that memory on her mind. It was evidently on her mind when she wrote—

" One ought to fear the least little sin more than one fears death."

But she made her effort, and, by dint of prayer and repentance—and, as she would doubtless have added, love—ultimately smothered the memory which she could not altogether escape from. This is the passage in which, knowing that she will soon have to face death, she sums up her conclusion of the whole matter—

" Our true glory and happiness depend only upon the last moment of our life. All the rest passes like smoke which disappears, carried away by the wind. It is only at our last hour—be it happy, or be it terrible—that God will reveal us to ourselves as we really are, and as we shall have to be, throughout all eternity, in the sight of the Universe and of God Himself.

" The Universe is a great and glorious temple, and the earth on which we dwell is its magnificent altar. God, for His own glory, brought this great and beautiful earth out of nothingness ;

but it is His will that all shall return thereto. Let us submit to His eternal decrees, and let us be fully persuaded that it is just that all things should perish for His glory and greatness, seeing that nothing exists save through His glory and greatness ; and that there is no day on which Nature ought not to pay homage to its Author for millions of victims, sacrificed, at every passing moment, by Time and Death to this Infinite and Incomprehensible Being, who alone exists, and who alone is worthy to exist. When our turn arrives, let us adore this Infinite Being with perfect resignation, and have no fear of death, because God is just. Let us live, however, in such a way that we may be able to hope for happiness after death ; and then let us leave to Him alone the care of our destiny, and, since God is God, and ever will be God, let us throw ourselves into His arms, hoping from His goodness alone the happy and glorious eternity which His sacrifice has merited for us."

That is the final confession of faith : the confession of a Catholic who had only arrived at making it after doing fierce battle with an overweening pride, with the vivacity of an excitable temperament, with some, at least, of those passions which she described as "the salt of life," and with a disposition to court flattery, make herself important, and interfere with everybody's business. It may be that it was not until death had her by the throat that she

actually won the battle; but one finds traces of the devout frame of mind in more than one of her later letters. One finds one such example in a letter to her cousin, Count Wasenau, a natural son of Vladislas of Poland, whom she exhorted to quit Court circles and take monastic vows—

"I envy" (she wrote) "the condition which makes this noble determination practicable for you. Nothing else is so great, so glorious, or so beautiful as the unreserved consecration of oneself to God. . . .

". . . Trust in God, not in yourself, and, if you are quite sure of your vocation, leave the world at once; leave it as you would leave a burning house. Have the courage to give God the little that you possess, and do not fear to be the loser. He will repay you with interest."

She added—for she found that temptation almost always irresistible—a word about herself—

"How glorious it is, and how delightful, to serve so good a Master! How happy I am to have given up so much to Him! There is a satisfaction in that which is worth more than the empire of the world."

Another remarkable letter is that in which she condoled with Del Monte on his father's death—

"He was taken ill this morning, and, by sunset, he was dead. What are we? We are dust and ashes; we are nothing. May God have mercy on us, and grant us grace to die in the enjoyment of His favour! Everything else is vanity. We shall all pass like shadows. Life is like a dream—gone like a flash of lightning. We are journeying—hasting—to eternity. May God, in His mercy, grant us a happy arrival at the haven!"

Her own need of the divine mercy was already near at hand when she wrote that. She knew it, or suspected it, and she acquiesced. In a letter to Mlle de Scudéry, the novelist,—the only letter preserved out of a considerable correspondence,—she defines, as it were, her position in the Land of Beulah.

She does not forget that she is, as she has always desired to be, the patroness of art and letters; so she pays the novelist compliments, which are a little more than conventional—

"Your works" (she writes) "are agreeable, useful, and learned. Your manner of handling a beautiful subject charms me. You amuse and instruct, and you are never tedious. I thank you for sending me the books. I owe many pleasant hours to you. I know not how to repay you for them."

But she makes such a return as she can by

writing confidentially about herself. She has not improved in appearance, she says, since her correspondent last saw her,—the flattery of courtiers does not impose upon her; and she has still graver reasons for feeling dissatisfied—

"I envy neither the good fortune, nor the vast domains, nor the treasures of those who possess these advantages; but I should like my merits and my virtues to raise me above the level of the rest of mankind. There you have the grounds of the discontent which I feel."

For the rest, she is, for the time being, in perfect health; but old age is stealing upon her, and she does not like the prospect of old age—

"If I were given the choice between old age and death, I think I should, without hesitation, choose the latter. Still, I have not been consulted, and I have accustomed myself to take life as it comes, and enjoy it. Death, nevertheless, is approaching, and will not fail to keep his appointment; but my mind is not disturbed. I do not desire death, but I await it without fearing it."

Presently she fell ill with an attack of erysipelas, accompanied by high fever. She

rallied, and wrote to her Governor-General, Olivekrans—

"It has pleased God—contrary to my expectations and hopes—to snatch me from the arms of death. I believed this last journey to be inevitable, and I had quite made up my mind to it. Thanks, however, to the combined miracle of grace, nature, and the medical art, I am still full of life; and the strength of my constitution has conquered a disease to which twenty Herculeses might have succumbed. I suppose it was grace which strengthened me, and enabled me to surprise the doctors."

But then came relapse. Some historians attribute it to the shock which she felt at hearing of a scandal in her household — some affair between a chambermaid and an abbé; but she was too ill for any such explanation to be necessary. She recognised, at any rate, that death, this time, was really imminent; and she made her preparations. Her will was brought to her to be signed, and a message was sent to the Pope, asking pardon for the affronts which her pride had put upon him, and begging for absolution and his blessing. He, too, was ill, or he would have come to her. As it was, he sent a Cardinal to speak the words of comfort which she needed; and she died peacefully at dawn on an April morning.

It has been said that visions of Monaldeschi

haunted her in her death agony; but that statement seems to have been the fabrication of an enemy, or of one who felt that a dramatic life needed a dramatic climax. All the contemporary evidence goes to show that she died in her sleep—or in a state of coma—comforted by the presence of Azzolino, who had watched beside her night and day, and was now to be the executor of her will and her residuary legatee.

He alone had really mattered to her, though much else had sometimes seemed to matter. Living her own life had meant many things to begin with; but, in the end, it had come to mean living in the enjoyment of such love as he could accord to her. There had been trouble, as we have seen—and something very like quarrel and estrangement—because, while she had loved, he had only let himself be loved; but, as the advancing years altered the character of her desires, she had been content to see passion decline into peaceful and faithful friendship. It had been her boast—engraved, like almost all her boasts, upon a medal—that she "had been born free and would die free"; but there was a kind of freedom which she neither attained nor sought. Servitude to her affections was not only acceptable but welcome to her.

Those chains she hugged. She died hugging them; and therefore she died happy. They had not confined her spirit, but had contributed to its emancipation.

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